Before & After by boogiewrites

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)
Genre: Angst, Eventual Relationships, Eventual Romance, Eventual Smut, F/M, Fluff, Friends to Lovers, Love Confessions, Mental Illness, Mild Gore, Psychic Abilities, Romance, Smut
Language: English
Characters: Jim "Chief" Hopper, Original Female Character(s)
Relationships: Jim "Chief" Hopper/Original Female Character(s), Jim "Chief" Hopper/You
Status: In-Progress
Published: 2018-02-22
Updated: 2018-06-15
Packaged: 2022-04-22 05:00:50
Rating: Explicit
Warnings: Graphic Depictions Of Violence, No Archive Warnings Apply
Chapters: 11
Words: 43,600
Publisher: archiveofourown.org
Summary:

Dealing with the 1 year anniversary of her almost life-ending accident coming up soon, our main character not only has to deal with how this makes her feel, but also how it’s making Jim feel.

1. Before

You took another drag off your cigarette, the cherry lighting up the wooden porch you leaned against. Your record player just loud enough to hear through the wooden walls of the cabin. You pulled your favorite flannel tighter across your body and pulled your nightgown down over your thighs, the sun was almost set and it was starting to get cold. You were wishing you'd put on pants before you came outside.
You hear it before you see it, the familiar but surprising rumble of the Chief's Blazer making it's way up the gravel back road to your cabin.

You'd been living in it for a few years now and it'd been empty for years prior to that. You'd done a nice job of cleaning it up and making it look a lot cozier and a lot less like a cabin you'd get murdered in. It felt like your home now.
The head lights bounced across the road, lighting up the woods as he pulled up. You took another drag and watched him get out of the vehicle, waiting until he'd shut the door to greet him, "Well, what'd I do now?" you asked sarcastically, exhaling a cloud of smoke.
"Nothing. It's never you I have to come bitch about, is it?" he says grumpily, making his way onto the porch. He leans against the other wooden post and pulls out a cigarette, you hand him the lighter from your shirt pocket.
"What brings you out here to see little 'ol me for, Chief? Business or pleasure?" you ask, casually.
"Both if I'm lucky…" He smirks and takes a drag off his cigarette.
You smile but shake your head, crossing your arms and resting your back against your wooden post, ignoring his questionable humor. "Everything alright?"
"Yeah, nothing life or death this time around…" he slumps slightly and stares off into the woods. "Flo did want me to say hello if I saw you, and demands you call her more." he turns his face back to you.
"I actually called her a few hours ago. You know me, I forget time exists for everybody else up here sometimes. "
"She worries about you."
"I'm aware." you say widening your eyes and chuckling.
"How are you doing by the way?" He bumps you with his elbow.

You shrug and kill the fire in your cigarette, mushing it into the banister of the porch. “I’m pretty good as far as I can tell.” you give a half-hearted smile and walk towards the door, “You comin’?” You ask, halfway into the house, looking back at him, you catch his eyes wandering over your body.
“Yeah…yeah.” he hurriedly replies as he puts out his cigarette and you go on into the cabin without him.
You take the needle off the record and clear off the coffee table, taking your journals into your bedroom. Jim shuts the front door behind him.
“Would you kick that fire up for me?” You yell from the bedroom.
“Yeah, sure.” He’s pushing more wood into the fireplace as you walk back out and into the kitchen.
You place your arms on the counter top, “So…” you tap the countertop. “You gonna tell me why you really came out here? And does it require drinks?” You say warmly.
“Yes. Please,” he says, taking off his coat, hat, and belt. “Bring it over to the couch and we’ll talk.”
You pour out the alcohol into your highball glasses and set them on the coffee table in front of him. “Oh!” You say suddenly remembering the bread you’d made earlier. You grab the loaf and slice it a few times, then slide it onto the table in front of him.
“You don’t have to feed me too…” Jim laughs.
“You know I do. It’s a fact,” you sit on the couch next to him, motioning to the bread. “I made it from scratch, you know it’s great if I made it.” You grin and he subtly nods in agreement, shoving an entire piece into his mouth.
“It’s good.” He garbles casually, through an overstuffed mouth.
“Thank you.” You reply graciously. “Now what’s with this ‘we need to talk’ business? Because from how you’re acting, it’s something I don’t want to hear so just get it over with so I can be mad at you and then you do some goofy, yet charming thing and I stop being mad and we move on.” you state plainly, having done this plenty of times before.
He smiles briefly and leans back. “Well, I didn’t wanna bring it up and upset you. You realize it’s very close to being a year since your accident, right? You’ve been really quiet the last few weeks so I wanted to make sure you were actually alright and not just saying that so I won’t worry about you.” he’s calm, he’s thought about this conversation. His level of concern was very kind and genuine but also

very annoying to deal with.
“I know.” you reach out and put your hand on his knee. “If you’re being honest, then I have to be too…” you let out a heavy sigh and he nods in agreement. “I’m not bad. The anniversary coming up feels really…strange. It feels like it’s been a lifetime and also feels like it’s just happened sometimes.” You retract, averting your gaze. "That’s the nature of trauma though…“ you drift off then look back at his face so he knows you aren’t upset.
"I’m so sorr-” he begins, before you cut him off with a hand on his mouth.
“We’ve been over this, Jim.” You almost bark at him, your face falling into seriousness. You keep your hand on his mouth and he makes a disgruntled noise with an expression to match. “I know you’re sorry but it wasn’t your fault. We’ve been over this. Bad things happen and you deal with it and move along if you can. We’ve both had to do it before, dear.” You pull back your hand and he grabs it with his own.
“Yeah but if you hadn’t left when you did…” he says low, taking both your hands and holding them between the two of you.
“It could’ve happened to anyone, you know that.” You look at him with empathy. “I’m healing from it, you are just holding yourself back on this. I’m a big girl…I got this.” you smile and bring his hands up to kiss them. “Alright?” he just keeps staring into your eyes, unsatisfied.
One of the few things you could do after the accident in the hospital was move your left arm up and down. This lead to numerous occasions of waking up to Jim’s large hands on top of yours. When you would move your hand, he would always take your hand and kiss it. In a state where you could not speak, you had started kissing his hand back by guiding it up to your lips. You didn’t remember much that happened the night of the accident, but you remembered the look on Jim’s face when you moved to kiss his hand. He had let out a choked laugh and through watery, red eyes, relief washed over his face. It was the clearest thing he’d ever expressed to you without words. You had always wondered why he had chosen to do that. He’d only ever hugged you before the accident. Sure, the few lingering touches and glances, but nothing ever as purposely affectionate as that. You had both continued to do it ever since. Anytime you would need him, whether you couldn’t speak or just didn’t have the words, you could always grab his hand. A non-verbal way to love and

support each other when words just wouldn't do.
"Whatever I say isn't gonna help, is it?" you ask, subtle smile forming in the corners of your mouth as you bring your hands up to playfully punch his jaw.
"You're right." he glances away with a huff. "Which is also terrible." he smiles and it turns into a small laugh. "Just know I'll always feel responsible and I'm going to ask if you're okay until I die. So just… get used to it I guess." he sounds very tired suddenly. He brings both your hands up and kisses them.
You return the gesture, letting go afterwards. "…and I'll always be working on being well enough for you to leave me alone." this makes you both laugh. "There's nothing like trauma to bring people together."
"I can't not worry about you, sweetheart." he kisses the scar on your head as he stands and heads to the bathroom.
"You flatter me, Jim." you smile as you watch him walk out the room. Your thoughts drifted as soon as he was out of sight. You sank into the couch, pulling a blanket over you, staring into the fire to collect your thoughts, something you found yourself doing a lot since fall was in full swing. You didn't feel the best, your injuries ached like you were 80 with this weather change. Your brain was a cycling state of uncertainty with big peaks and valleys, you were learning to navigate it since you'd gotten hurt. You didn't feel that different sometimes, but other days were hard and you were very difficult to be around.
The weight of Jim sitting back down on the couch snaps you out of your inner monologue.
"Finding you staring off like that isn't the most reassuring thing you know." he rests his elbows on his knees, leaning forward.
"I just like to get lost in my thoughts. You know this. " you turn to him. "I did it before the accident too."
"Yeah, I remember." a pleasant look falls across his face. He reaches out to rub your knee. "You'd sit at that desk and just get lost in your own little world all the time." he smiles at the memory.
"Flo would tell me you'd fire me if you caught on." you a small breathy laugh escapes your lips.
"She knew I liked you so I wouldn't fire you because I hated everybody in that job before you." he grins and takes a drink.
"I think she preferred to have me close after all that time apart, keep an eye on me. So she didn't want to give you a reason to fire me.

Then she'd have to find someone else and deal with you bitching about them."
"It's true." he nods and his body relaxes. "Have you thought about coming back?"
You pause to think about how to answer the question without creating more questions about how you're doing. "Yeah. I like to daydream about it. I'm not ready right now but I like to entertain that I'll go back."
"Good." he nods, he actually looks a little happy. "I'll look forward to it. It's not the same without you." he says in a gruff tone."I've still not hired anyone else. Flo is mad as hell about dealing with me by herself again."
"I know, I have to hear about it. " you smirk.
"What else has she been telling you?"
"Oh you know, just…everything." You grin. She loved to share embarrassing stories about Jim because she knew you enjoyed them.
"Hopefully not everything." he mumbles.
"Well, how would I know?"
"That's why you should come back. So I can make sure you get the facts and not some juiced up Flo version of the story." his smile fades slightly, he trails off.
It's obvious the year anniversary is haunting him. He was the one who had to drive onto the scene and see you in that moment, thinking you were dead. You really needed to remember that and not be so dismissive of him. It was just hard to deal with the level of intensity that he brought with him everywhere he went. His large and intense nature was opposite of your own, and you didn't know how to handle it sometimes, even before the mild brain damage.
He continued, "Would you like to do something next week? For your anniversary. Is that something you'd like to…celebrate?" his face scrunches as he tries to figure out how to ask you this without sounding like he's asking you to prom. "Would you feel up to going out and doing something?" he asks, turning his face towards you, his body language very stiff.
"I hadn't thought about it, like what?" You really hadn't thought about it. Maybe it would be nice to celebrate a year of not being dead like you could've been.
"Well, I wouldn't want you to go too far away, don't want to wear you out or anything."
You grin. "I'm not that fragile, Jim." you give him a look. "You know

I don't need to be babied now."
He huffs, "I know, sorry. It's just hard to get that image of you out of my head." he reaches out as he speaks, as if he's reaching out out, into the memory. You knew he meant from the night of the accident when it'd taken all the other police officers already on the scene to hold him back from getting to you. You understood his point.
"I know, I'm sorry." You both smile at each other, having said those things to each other more times than you could count; having fought and argued about these things more times than you could count. Your anger wasn't as much of a raging beast as it once was, but you still didn't want pity.
"You deserve to have something nice done for you and I just don't know what and it's frustrating," he exclaims with his hands.
You feel a slight blush rise to your face,"Well that's very sweet of you, Hop." you think a moment to see if you have anything that could help him out. "Well, you've got…eating, sleeping, music, reading…" you count the things on your fingers "…yeah that's all I got." you lower your hands, defeated.
He shakes his head. "We've hung out here so much, doing all those things that I don't know how to make it special. I know you don't really want to go anywhere far away."
"I don't have agoraphobia, Hop, I can leave the cabin…I do all the time. You make me sound like a hermit."
"I'm not good at this sort of thing," he admits softly.
"Well, should I ask Flo?" you had barely gotten the words out when he forcefully cut you off.
"No! I mean…no, don't bother her with it, you know she'll want a huge party or something." You nod in response, knowing he's right.
"Alright, noted." You pause to think. "Well, I love cooking, I can cook us something, we can watch some dumb shit, get drunk, make bad decisions…all that good feeling junk." you offer.
"I don't want you to have to cook on a day that's suppose to be about you," he states, staring straight ahead, his leg starting to bounce up and down in thought. "I'll figure it out…" he rubs his hand across his face.
"So you wanna do it on exactly one year or the weekend or…" He cuts you off.
"Exactly a year," he spoke softly.
"Alright, so next Thursday then?"
He nods. "3:40 AM." he doesn't look at you. He's lost in the memory

of that night again. You reach over and rub his shoulder.
“Hop…” He responds to your touch and puts his hand over yours. He turns to you and half-halfheartedly smiles, his eyes a little sad still. “It’ll be great. Whatever you come up with I can guarantee I at the very least, won’t hate it.” You try to sound supportive and put your head on his shoulder, wanting to comfort him like he never hesitates to do with you. He places his head on top of yours.
“I hope you’re right."

Unknown to you, your closest friend Jim had made a promise to himself after your accident. He would wait a year, let you heal, then he would finally make his move.

2. The Day Before

Summary for the Chapter:

> Dealing with the 1 year anniversary of her almost life-ending accident coming up soon, our character not only has to deal with how this makes her feel, but also how it's making Jim feel.

The moment the phone rings, you find yourself stuck in what used to be your go-to dress, not being able to pull it over your chest after the weight gain you'd experienced since getting hurt. Your arms were tangled in the sleeves and you were trying to pull free without hurting yourself or the dress. You wrestle out of it, knock the needle off your record that's playing and fall onto the bed and reach for the phone.

"Hello?"
"Hello Honey!" you hear Flo chirp. "Are you okay? It took you a few rings to make it to the phone." always the observant one. She and Jim together were an endless ocean of concern.
"Yes. I just found myself tangled up for a minute, I'm fine." You glare over at the dress thrown onto the bed next to you.
"Well I thought that we should go out and try to find you something nice for your anniversary!" she means well. I haven't exactly had the money to spend on myself or anything so a shopping montage didn't sound like the worst thing ever. I was supposed to remember to celebrate, after all.
"Well, I just so happen to find myself in need of a nice dress. My old one just betrayed my trust and it's just not going to work out between us any longer." you flatly reply.
"Well…" she pauses. "…honey, I don't know how to put this but you've put on some weight…" she reconsiders her statement. "I mean you're beautiful, dear. Not that it's related. I didn't mean… Dammit." she places her hand over the receiver but you can still her, her string of swears as she thinks she's hurt my feelings.
"Flo…It's fine. I own mirrors, I'm also not blind." you laugh. Body image was something you'd fought for years to have a healthy relationship with and after the accident made that no different. Sure

you're a bit more stitched together than you had been previously, a bit squishier in places, but, scars make you look like a badass, right?
"Well, I didn't want to upset you. You're beautiful, anyone would be crazy not to think you're a catch! Even if you put on 100 pounds! If your butt got as big as the moon!…" She continues on a charming but clumsy rant about how no matter what I looked like I'd still be perfect to her. It's nice to hear these things sometimes.
"Thank you, Flo…I think." you both laugh into the receiver.
"Well…you need new clothes so we'll go into town and get you some new basics…a nice dress to wear…we'll make an afternoon of it! It'll be lovely. Just like you are dear." she coos.
"I appreciate it, I do. It's nice to hear." Thursday was coming in at you fast. You were hoping the two people who had this big idea in the first place weren't going to turn it into something bigger than it needed to be. "We can eat, I'll get a dress, maybe pick out some movies for Thursday…" you trail off retreating to your thoughts, trying to psych yourself up for this, as you were referring to it, your "death day" instead of birthday. But no one else really seemed to find it as funny as you had.
"Movies? " she sounded surprised. "So…you're gonna watch movies, huh?" she said slowly like she was trying to talk to someone else and you at the same time.
"I assumed, yes? I don't know. It's what we usually do so I thought I'd just do it so Jim didn't have to…" you trailed off as you were trying to listen to the conversation happening behind her hand on the receiver.
"Oh! Alright dear well that sounds nice then…" the muffled mumbles continue. "We can meet in town at noon and start with lunch. Sound good?" she's back to her normal speaking voice now.
"Yeah, that's good. Were you just talking to someone?"
"Oh, no, no, dear, I just got distracted. I'll see you tomorrow." and the phone clicks. A short sign off is unusual. Was everyone acting just slightly off or did you need to up your meds?

You roll out of bed, kicking your ill-fitting clothes into a pile in the closet. You let out a heavy sigh and glance around the cabin. You should really pick this place up, really try to give this "death day" celebration a chance. You used to love birthdays, this really wasn't all that different if you think about it.
The phone rings again, scaring you enough to jump, embarrassment

forcing you out of your train of thought.
“Hello?”
“Hey, sweetheart, how you been?” You heard Jim’s deep voice come through the line.
“I’’m good. I was starting to wonder if you’d forgotten about me, Hop.” He hadn’t been by in over a week, which was more than unusual, so hearing his voice felt comforting.
“I know I haven’t been by, sorry.” he pauses, “I’ve been busy as hell and distracted and I apologize. Yell at me if you want, I deserve it.” he grumbles.
“Oh hush Jim, if I were mad, don’t you think you would’ve heard about it by now?”
You hear him laugh, “That’s true.” he clears his throat, “I just want to make sure I let you know our plans.”
“Well get in line, Flo is taking me out too. Shopping and eating, meeting at noon in town, and then…however long that expedition is going to take.” you fiddle with the phone cord in your fingers.
“Shopping, huh?” he asks.
“Yeah I need some new stuff and Flo is paying so I’m just going with it. She wants me to get a nice dress for tomorrow for some reason and I need a new one so…that worked itself out. I’m supposed to be celebrating so it makes sense.”
“Yeah, you deserve to get yourself something nice, I’m glad you’re trying to embrace it, I appreciate the attitude.”
“Thanks for noticing. Speaking of, what will you be needing of me on the big day?” you hoped your anxiousness wasn’t coming through your voice.
“Just your company. I’d like to meet you around 5. That work for you?”
“Yeah, that gives me plenty of time to get ready.” after town with Flo you’d want some recharge time to get ready, prepare yourself for whatever the hell these two were gonna throw at you. “Anything I need to know beforehand? So I don’t do something that makes a complete fool of myself?” you say less seriously than you meant it.
“You could never. If you do, I’ll just be an even bigger idiot and divert the attention away from you,” he laughs, “It’s not very hard for me to do, I do it without even trying sometimes.” he continues to laugh at his own jokes.
“Thanks for the backup, Chief. You make an excellent wingman,” you respond dryly.

“Anytime, sweetheart. I’ll be there at 5 and I’m gonna try my damnedest to give you a great night.”
“I’m sure it’ll be great, Hop. I have complete faith in you.”
“Poor decision but I appreciate it.” he lowly chuckles. “See you tomorrow, death day girl.”
A big smile spreads across your face as you hear him adopt your name for the day, practically beaming. “See ya, Hop.” with that you both hang up.
You reach over to put the needle back on your record, sitting on the edge of the bed. You take a few deep breaths to try to prepare yourself for the things you still needed to get finished by the end of the night; cleaning the cabin, then yourself and trying to fall asleep.

You found the last part the most difficult.

3. Preperation

Summary for the Chapter:

> Dealing with the 1 year anniversary of her almost life-ending accident coming up soon, our character not only has to deal with how this makes her feel, but also how it's making Jim feel. The final build-up to the big night.

The room was dark, lit by candlelight with moonlight shining through a window, you recognized it as Jim's office. You look across his desk and he's there, you're both leaning in on his desk, facing each other and looking at papers; you're laughing about something. You don't understand what.

You feel happy, safe, at ease. You're talking but it's like you're not in control of the things you're saying, you can't tell what he's saying to you and it's really confusing. Then you look up at him, finding he'd already been staring at you. You both realize how close your faces are, you can feel the heat coming off of his body he's so close. This brings a good feeling that spreads across your skin like the warmth radiating off of him. You look at each other for what feels like forever, and then he retreats, he sits back in his chair and speaks, but you can't understand what he's saying. It's like you're hearing the conversation from another room, and can't make out the words. The room starts to go dark and you wake up.

It's one of those weird reoccurring dreams again. You started having them about 6 months ago. They're the same, always waking up with lots of emotions you couldn't explain. You were covered with a thin veil of sweat, your hair sticking to your face. You look at the clock to see you still have hours to sleep before you have to get up, you let out a tension-filled sigh and try to fall back asleep, staring out the window at the sky until you can relax enough to fall back to sleep.

You're woken by your alarm, radio blaring. You roll onto your back, trying to shake off the dreams of the night before. You begin your day with putting on a few layers of clothes, You start up the fire and coffee to prep you for the big day. You didn't exactly feel special or different, but there were the anxious nerves wiggling around in your

gut that you weren't thrilled about.
You poured your coffee and went to sit out on the back porch. You sink into the large chair and listen to the sounds of the woods around you. For late fall it really is nice out, sunshine was hitting your face, you sipped your coffee, trying to feel present and in the moment.
"I'm being thankful for being alive today," You said aloud to no one, "We feel our emotions and let them go. Don't be afraid of them. Don't fight them. Feel them and move on." You went over your mantra a few times, trying to set your goal for the day, hyping yourself up. You felt optimistic in this moment, this could be a great day if you'd just let it be.

You stood in front of a 3 sided mirror on a raised platform in a little boutique downtown. Flo was chittering away and holding up dresses on their hangers over you and making disapproving noises.
"Could I have a minute and just, get some air?" you ask politely.
"Oh of course! I'm not letting you do a thing, I'm so used to handling everything myself." She tosses the clothes on the hangers onto a chair." Go, go, shoo, come back to me in 10 and you can pick some clothes out." she heads over the couch in the corner of the room and opens a magazine. You make your way out the back door and light a cigarette. It's closing in on 2:30 and you want to be out of here by 3 to have enough time to get ready but there just hadn't been anything that felt right on you and you were starting to feel weary. You had, admittedly, let yourself get excited about finding the perfect dress to really help you have a good time tonight. You take a big stretch and kill your cigarette, taking a deep breath, heading back into the store.
You start browsing the racks, seeing a lady coming from the back with dresses that you hadn't seen.
"Ma'am? Are those new?" you inquire, hoping that they were styles that weren't already on the floor.
"Yeah, I had just tagged and put them in the system, they'll be going on the big front rack, there's some out there already." she answered enthusiastically.
"Thanks!" you're already on the move. You trace your fingers along the tops of the hangers, almost summoning a dress you liked. You sort through the hangers. You pick out a few and head straight to the dressing room, you narrow it down to two. They are what you felt like you should go for today; bold, daring, confident, even sexy if you hear the right music and drink the right drinks. One is both almost

uncomfortably low cut and short with long sleeves and red. The other, solid black, form-fitting, just a few inches above the knee, elbow length sleeves and off the shoulder. This one had a lot less cleavage than the previous choice, but not having cleavage would be hard with your size chest, it felt like the weight you had gained had preferred to congregate in your boobs. You had accepted this new fact about your body but hadn't had the chance to really…use them yet? You hadn't flexed any of your feminine charms in…? You exhale hard at the thought. Over 2 years, right…great. You try to not delve into the mood swing that would occur if you thought about how long it'd been since you'd had sex. Trying not to feel sorry for yourself, you step out of the dressing room and on to the raised pedestal, Flo not missing a beat, standing and circling you in judgment. She doesn't say anything, she stands with her hand on her chin, thinking, considering for a few moments.

"First of all, you look amazing," she states enthusiastically, "Secondly, you really look like your mother, "She smiles and sighs, "With that said…" she continues, standing next you, talking with her hands, "It's a bit…sexier than I was thinking but…" she says, trying to stay neutral.

"Oh, I agree completely," you say, laughing, looking at yourself in the mirrors. "I didn't know if it was too much. But I was trying to find something that made me feel something, ya know?" She nods, her fingers fussing with the hem.

"And you're comfortable with your scars showing?" she whispers, close to you, being discreet.

"Well, yeah," you reply unconcerned. "I mean, I can't do anything about them, I'm healing up pretty nice." you shrug. "Jim's seen my scars so I'm not worried about it. I'll be with him and that means that no other man will dare approach me with that big bear of a man with me." you let out a small laugh, thinking about your self-proclaimed protector. "There's another choice, wanna see it?" you ask her hopefully. She nods, and you change.

"Oh, this one I like much better." She says as you stand on the raised circle. She starts circling again, furrowing her brow in thought.

"You're being pretty intense about these dresses Flo…" you watched her eyes, deep in thought, it was just a dress, she shouldn't care that much.

"I just want it to be perfect, that's all. This one is very nice. It's not too much, just enough. You don't look like you're giving it out for

free in this one," she smirks and lets out an amused sound, adjusting her glasses."You look great, sweetheart." she places her hands on your shoulders, looking at your reflections in the mirror.
"I do like this one. I hate to admit it but it but I might feel a little sexy in this dress." you let out a small laugh.
"Well, you look sexy, dear. That feels weird coming from me…" she raises her eyebrows, "but, if someone didn't make a move on you in this…" she tuts and shakes her head, " Well, they'd really be the biggest idiot I've ever known." she fusses with the neckline of the dress, face frowning slightly, clearly distracted.
"That's very sweet." you smile at her after she stops fixing the dress. She lets out a big sigh and asks, "Shoes? What are you doing with your hair and makeup? I didn't even think of that. What time is it? Do we have time to-" you cut her off before she gets too excited.
"I have the stuff at home to do it, I bought everything I'd need a few days ago.
"Oh that's great news." she says, placing her hand on her chest, relieved. "Well you were always just fine with your hair and makeup." she bats her hand at you, expressing her point. "Shoes?"
"I could just wear those black flats we got at the shoe store, I can't really wear heels comfortably long with my back and stuff now…" you frown slightly, heels would really set this off.
"Take the flats for later! I saw some heels over here…" she wanders off into the store. You stand on your tiptoes and imagine the dress with heels. Flo places a pair of black velvet high heels at your feet. "These." she commands. You slip them on.
"Damn." you react, unsure of your dedication to this look. They were perfect, about 4 inches, not too tall for you. They made your legs and butt look great. Wait, were you really gonna get this dressed up? You have second thoughts. "These are too much Flo, I can't wear these." you state.
"Don't be ridiculous. You said you wanted to wear something that made you feel something. Do they?" she insists. She isn't wrong.
"You're right." you scrunch your face, "I can do this. I'm a grown ass woman."
"Yes you are, and you are a smart, funny and strong grown ass woman and you should look and feel the part." She looks over her glasses at you, " Come on girl, stand up straight. Push your shoulders back, push your boobs out…" she places her hands over your body, correcting your posture. "…there." she states, proudly, as you fluff

your hair, put your hand on your hip. “Your mother, rest her soul, she was a looker, and you are too.” She messes with your hair again.
“Yeah, she was.” you push away the thought. “I needed a pep talk, thanks.” You say warmly, hugging her. You turn back to your reflection, adjust the dress and pose. “I’ve done this before, I can do it again.” you nod at your reflection. “Pack these up, I’ve got a death day to celebrate.”

4. The Anniversary

Summary for the Chapter:

> Dealing with the 1 year anniversary of her almost life-ending accident coming up soon, our character not only has to deal with how this makes her feel, but also how it's making Jim feel. The anniversary.

You decide to wear your hair in big soft waves, your makeup just a bit more than natural. You search for a coat to wear while in your underwear, to keep from messing up your dress. You were feeling surprisingly well. You were slowly pushing that bad mood cloud that always seemed to hover above you away, at least temporarily.

You decide on a basic black leather jacket. It's never let you down. You look at the clock, 4:30, you better get your clothes on now. You're listening to music and watching yourself move in your new dress in your mirror, looking yourself over one last time. Your hair had grown out over the scar on your head and concealed it for the most part; a small stretch of it creeping out of your hairline on the side of your face. You were confident in your body and what it could do again. You had come so far. But your makeup took too long to start crying over your pride. You were glad you got on board with this. You hear the growing rumble of the Blazer in the distance and you feel that anxious wiggling in your gut again. You give yourself a stern look in the mirror, pointing a finger at yourself. "Don't you go feeling nervous. Cut the bullshit, lady, we've got a night to enjoy."
You hear him knock on the door as you shut your bedroom door. You walk up to grab your purse off of the kitchen counter and look at Jim over your shoulder as he walks through the door. He keeps his eyes on the keys in his hands while he announces his arrival.
"I'm here, sweetheart. You ready to go?" he doesn't look up until he's shut the door behind him. You're already making your way across the floor to him. His eyes wander down your body as you move closer. You take the time to appreciate the effort he's put forth for you this evening. He's wearing a big navy wool coat over a grey shirt, dark pants with nice boots. With his hair combed back and his beard

tamed, he looked so handsome. Your eyes meet, you both smile sheepishly at each other for a moment. He takes the time to swallow and wet his lips, giving you an obvious flirty once over, “Well, look at you…” he grins, he reaches up and rubs his chin before holding his hand up to motion you to give him a twirl. You roll your eyes but oblige his request. “You better be glad you’re with the Chief of police tonight, looking like that.” he pauses, giving you a charming smile. “You look like trouble in that outfit, sweetheart.” his tone changing into something less dark and more friendly, he shakes his head. “I mean that as a compliment,” he adds, leaning into you just a bit. “The kind of trouble I’d wanna get into.” he lets out a small awkward laugh.

You smile and swat your hand at him, “Oh, go on…” you laugh and reach out, smoothing the lapels on his jacket as he watches you. “I feel a little bit like trouble tonight.” give him a small sly smile, scrunching your nose at him. “You look very handsome in this. ” you say, changing the subject.

“Thanks,” he replies hesitantly. “But I think people are going to wonder why a beautiful woman like you is out with a big monster like me.” he smiles down at you.

“Oh don’t be ridiculous Jim.” You playfully smack his chest, “No one’s even going to notice you with me around.” he lets out a snort of a laugh.

“There she is,” he says happily, embracing you. “You seem a bit more like your old self tonight.” your arms are pinned between you, hands on his chest. You could feel his heartbeat, he smelled so nice. He releases his grip on you.

“I feel…” you take a deep breath in, “…good. Better than good.” you raise your eyebrows at him.

“I can tell, it looks good on you.” he smiles at you, “You ready?” he asks, adjusting his coat.

“Whenever you are.” He turns to the door, switching off the lights. “Do I get to know where we’re going?” you follow him to his Blazer.

“I’m taking you somewhere nice.” he says, opening the car door and holding your hand as you climb in. “It’s a little bit of a drive but, should be worth it.” He says as he shuts the door for you and you watch him make the walk to the other side of the vehicle, wondering what he’s come up with.

You’d been driving for over half an hour, and you were not sure where you were at. The road was quiet and the scenery beautiful.

You watched all the colors of the sunset on the trees. You still hadn't asked where you were going again, although the anticipation was killing you. The music played softly through the speakers of Jim's blazer. His knuckles were white from the grip he'd been putting on the steering wheel. You weren't sure if you should be nervous too.
"There wouldn't happen to be food where we're going is there?" You ask as a hunger pang starts to divert your attention.
"Of course there is. What kind of friend would I be if I didn't do something that involved food?" he laughs and keeps his eyes on the road.
"You wouldn't be." you laugh. "If you were my friend you'd know better."
"Exactly. You're not going to get hungry and cranky tonight. There will be plenty of food, I promise." he continues laughing and reaches over and pats your leg. Usually, only a casual, friendly touch became suddenly much more intimate as he'd forgotten there wasn't fabric covering your legs. He freezes for a few seconds longer than necessary, his fingers having had landed between your thighs. You look over at him, but he refuses to acknowledge the electricity buzzing in the air. You see the lump in his throat bob up and down as his face falls straight. His hands returning to the wheel, keeping his eyes on the road, you didn't say too much the rest of the drive.
You finally pull off onto a smaller road and Hopper clears his throat.
"We're almost there." You sit up straight and smooth out your dress.
"Anything looking familiar yet?" he asks, glancing over at you.
You turn your face to the window, shaking your head. "No…should it?" You said, worried you were already messing up the evening.
"Maybe." he looks back to the road. The closed in trees on either side of the road start to thin and open to reveal a huge log building.
"The Overlook." you read aloud. It seemed to be a hotel with a restaurant and bar. It was a big beautiful wooden monster of a building in the middle of nowhere. It almost felt familiar but then again, your memory wasn't the best. You were sure you'd never been to this hotel before though. "That sounds so familiar." you said under your breath. Jim's eyes watched your face focus.
"They finished this place up just a few months ago." he says, rolling up the entrance and pulling up the valet.
"This place has Valet? James, you are spoiling this woman tonight." you say both impressed with and picking on him.
"Anything for you, babe." he says with a charming glance, as the

valet pulls open your doors.
You trot in your heels up to the door, waiting as Jim spoke to the valet. You look around, take a deep breath of the air as it was starting to chill. This place was gorgeous. You didn't deserve all this. He saunters up the walkway. He moved smoothly towards you, putting his arm around your shoulders as you walk through the grand entrance of the hotel. You move into the restaurant, it's dark, it's gorgeous and you don't remember the last time you were in a place this nice. He leans into your ear, almost whispering his voice is so low.
"Go wait at the bar if you don't mind, I have to check the reservations." he says, placing his hand on the small of your back. You nod and find a nice spot, a friendly bartender appears. "You must be Mrs. Hopper." she says cheerfully, "Would you like a drink?" You are confused, but maybe she just saw the reservation and assumed?
"Sure, why not?" you pause to think, "I'm celebrating tonight, have anything to suit that?"
"Congrats, and yes! We have a birthday special, would you be interested in that? It doesn't have to be your birthday to order it though." she winks.
"Sounds great, thank you." she begins to make the drink. "You mistakenly called me Mrs. Hopper when I came in? May I ask why?" you try to ask casually.
"Oh, I'm sorry! I just knew there was a reservation for the whole balcony tonight for Hopper party of two, and I assumed. My apologies." she lowers her head as she keeps making the drink.
"Rented out the whole balcony?" you ask, your jaw going a bit slack in surprise.
"Yes, it's terribly romantic isn't it?" she says, smiling. She hands you your big, obnoxious, fruity, party drink. She walks to another side of the bar. You sip on the sickeningly sweet drink as you're pondering this newly found information, then Jim slides up next to you.
"Come here often, gorgeous?" he asks, grinning and leaning on the bar. You can't help but smile. You turn yourself towards him, flipping your hair over your shoulder.
"No. I don't. In fact, another man brought me here tonight." you say flirtatiously. A full laugh comes from him, he runs his hand through his hair.
"Well, you don't mind if I steal you from him, do you?" he says,

gesturing away from the bar to another large room.
“Of course not. You’re much more handsome than he is anyway.” you say, placing your hand on his chest and lightly dragging it across him as you walk away from him, you hear him laugh again.
“Don’t go running off so fast, sweetheart.” He picks up your drink and follows you.
You stop in the threshold of the room. You glance as up as you turn to look back at him. But you see an entire huge wall of glass with a stone balcony on the other side. It looked out over a huge valley of fall colored trees as the sun was just starting to fall between two of the mountains. It was possibly the most picturesque moment you’d ever experienced. You start to slowly walk towards the door to the balcony, you feel Jim behind you. “You remember it now?” he says, as he passes you, holding the door out for you. You walk out to the ledge, a huge drop off into nothing but golden hues, with pinks, purples, and yellows from the setting sun. The Overlook. The building being here made you not recognize the place. You hadn’t been here since you were young. But how does he even know about all that?
“Jim…” you say softly, reaching backward for him and not taking your eyes off the view. “I remember this.” he stands silently, holding your hand, watching you. “How did you know…?” you trail off, awestruck.
“A certain Aunt of yours might’ve told me about you coming here in the summer.” he said, looking out. “I can see why you’d like this place so much.” Flo. Of course. But, why would she tell him about this place? You’re pulled from the thought by a sudden warmth to your right. You look over and see an employee lighting a giant fireplace. You turn and slowly walk towards it and put your arms around yourself, getting lost in the memories that came with thinking about your long summer nights at the overlook.
“Your meal is ready Mr. Hopper.” a young boy says. You turn and look over at Jim. He holds his arms out over one of the tables.
“Ready when you are, sweetheart.” his voice was so patient. Tears were trying to form in your eyes because you had so many emotions. You let him scoot in your chair and you sit alone together after you order, you stare, admiring the valley.
“You know this is absolutely ridiculous, Jim.” you turn your head lazily to make eye contact. You see his face fall and his jaw tighten. “No, I’m not complaining. ” You shake your head and give him a

warm smile. “At all. This is the nicest thing anyone’s ever done for me. This is just, I say too much but I mean it’s just…overwhelming in a good way.” you try to convey you aren’t in the least bit critiquing his choices. He lets out a heavy breath.
“That’s a relief.” he closes his eyes for a moment to calm back down. He turns to look at the view and you get a good long look at him. For a giant goober, he’s pretty handsome. You notice the way the sun hits his eyes, the way the golden hour light softened his hard expression. You feel yourself begin to get a little flustered. Was it hot in here or was it him or…you…or….no you’re actually sweating? You’re actually hot. You were close enough to the fire and it was giving you enough heat to where you didn’t need the coat anymore. Shit. Now he’s gonna see you without the jacket on, it had been subconsciously working as a security blanket for you. This was so damn romantic and you’re all dolled up and this was starting to feel like a different type of anniversary. You didn’t deserve this.
“I’m getting hot.” you mumble, unzipping your coat. Jim tuts at you and rises to take your coat. You give him a look of “Really?” You stand and turn around to give in. “Such a gentleman.” you kid with him as he takes your coat off, hanging it on your chair. Here is the moment you’ve been pretending to not be anxious about. There’s no reason to be anxious, Jim has even seen you naked before. Although that had been in a completely nonsexual situation. Not in a man looking at woman’s body who is capable of doing the things that one would think about when looking at a woman that looks like you do right now. He’s quiet and his eyes get a little dark, he’s looking over your body, seemingly not even caring if you can tell. He sighs and takes his bottom lip into his mouth and he looks up and into your eyes.
“You should be glad I’m such a gentleman with you looking like this.” You feel the heat in between your legs first, and your face soon follows. He can see you blushing. Way to play it cool. He’s never been this aggressive with you when it came to flirting, you were impressed by it honestly. He stood confidently, smirking at you. “Come on, gorgeous.” he said softly, motioning to your chair. You hold eye contact with him until you turn to sit back down, wearing an unsure but flirty face.
You share stories of the summers spent at the overlook. You drink, you eat, the inside of the restaurant has filled out by the time the moon is in the sky. The fire is warm, your heart and stomach are full.

Jim has outdone himself and you realize now you're going to have to pay him back for tonight, you still feel a tad guilty.
"How did you pull this off, Jim? The whole balcony is empty but us." you use your hand motioning to the other tables, all empty. A cocky grin appears on his face.
"Well, I am the Chief of Police you know." he says playfully shrugging. "The title has its perks on occasion."
"Look at you, pulling clout to get 'Lil 'ol me an entire balcony to myself. " You lean forward on the table with your elbows, your chest heaving itself out of your dress just slightly, " Ya didn't have to do all this just to get me alone, Chief." You take a slow sip of your drink. He smiles at you, but this smile brings back that heat to your inner thighs. His eyes are dark, his brow low. His mouth pulled into a sly closed mouth smile.
In time to break the tension, the dessert cart rolls around and before you can even think about it, Jim says, "One of everything please, pack it with the stuff to go." he smiles charmingly at the young girl pushing the cart who nods and walks away. Your mouth hangs open. You dart your eyes around in surprise.
"What the…Who is this handsome man throwing money and his name around for me? Well, I declare, what have you done with my dusty 'ol curmudgeon, Hop? " you purposely up your southern accent and give him a coy smile, fanning your face with your hand. He laughs, eyes crinkling at the edges.
"Not gone anywhere, sweetheart." he tosses his napkin onto the tabletop, crossing the table to pull out your chair. "I told you I wanted to give you a great night." he puts your coat on you.
"Well you're doing an unbelievable job." you say encouragingly. He puts his arm around your shoulders and you start out of the restaurant.
Jim places the large bags of take out into the back of the Blazer. You drive back in the direction you came. "Can I ask if we're going home now?" you say, taking off your heels.
"Of course you can and yes, we're going back to the cabin."
"But I'm assuming the night isn't over?" you ask, looking out the window.
"Far from it."
Neither of you talk much on the way back. You're feeling great, full of food, alcohol, and compliments. You don't feel the need to make small talk. You pull up to the cabin, you put your heels back on.

“Mind if I ask why you wore those?” he asks as he holds open your door, offering you his hand to get out.
“Flo.” you answer quickly, a hint of agitation in your voice. He laughs and nods, understanding.
“Don’t get me wrong, they look great.” he says walking ahead of you.
“I agree. They just aren’t the most practical things to walk to a cabin in the woods in the dark in.” you complain as you slowly cross your front yard.
“You said it, not me.” he laughed and opened the door before you were up to the stairs and shuts it, standing in front of it, almost as big as the door itself. " I’m gonna go in first and I’ll be back in just a minute, okay?“ You shrug and nod. More surprises. He slides in the door with the bags of food and you hear his movement through the door. He slides back out a few minutes later. "I want to surprise you so I’m gonna cover your eyes and walk you in.” You let out an annoyed groan.
“You have to cover my eyes? What am I 8?” you asked with faux exasperation.
“Oh come on…” he says pleadingly, walking behind you and putting his hands on your face. You place your hands on his. He directs you, pushing your legs with his to the far side of the cabin. He takes his hands off, onto your shoulders. “Okay, look now.” You blink as your eyes adjust to the light. In front of you sits an old piano against one of the walls of the cabin. You drop your hands and look back at Jim.
“Jim…you didn’t…”
“I did.” he beams.
“You didn’t! Jim!” you squeak out in excitement as you reach to smack him.
He laughs and watches you gawk at the piano. “I know I didn’t have to. But I wanted to.” he said, you trace your fingers across the keys.
You hadn’t played piano since before you had to have the physical therapy on your hand. You just hadn’t picked it back up, but you missed it dearly.
“I don’t remember telling you I missed playing.” you sat on the old bench.
“You didn’t have to.” he said, standing over you. “I wanted tonight to be about making you happy.” he pauses for a moment.“ So I thought about the happiest I’ve ever seen you, and that was at the new year’s party 2 years ago, playing that piano and singing. The high school got some money and they got new ones so I got one of the older ones

for you." You smiled at the memory of the party.
"The old ones sound better anyway." you say dreamily, giving the piano a good look over. You stand and put Jim's face between your hands, he's smiling like a dope, very proud of himself. "Jim. Chief Hopper. Closest confidant, biggest pain in my ass…" you proclaim, speaking loudly to his big face in your hands. You're beaming at him with shock and happiness. "You are amazing and wonderful and I don't know what I did to deserve this but thank you." you declare. "I'm uncomfortable with how happy I am right now." you release his face and see yet another surprise behind him as you lightly smack his cheek to push him to the side and walk past him as he lets out a laugh and follows you around again.
"WHAT IN THE BLUE HELL IS THIS?" you shout gesturing with both arms towards the huge projector now occupying a wall in your cabin.
"Now, that you don't get to keep." he starts and laughs. "I have some kids in AV club, owe me a favor so I had them hook this up for us." You stand there with your mouth open and don't know what to say to all this. This is a new feeling. You see the spread of food he's put on the counter with alcohol and junk food and you feel a little dizzy. You go over and plop onto the couch, looking at the projection set up, overwhelmed.
"I love this, this is perfect, you're so smart." you babble, grabbing his arm as he sits next to you. He might've even blushed at your words. He sits there in silence as you process all this. He hoped he hadn't gone too overboard.
"You good?" he asks, pushing your hair back.
"Yeah," you nod, a little dazed. "I'm great, don't worry." you look at him, wide-eyed. "Just…this is a lot for a girl to take in, Hop." you give him a kind laugh and look around the room.
"I probably shouldn't tell you about the-" he begins as your head whips towards him, your eyes wild. He doesn't even get out his lie before he starts laughing at your expression. "I'm just kidding. I'm glad you're happy." he says softly.
"I am." you say, standing up. You hang your coat up and pull on some slippers. You start looking over the deserts from the restaurant, the fire is roaring and Jim starts up the projector, turning the lights out. The fire giving the room a golden hue. You found yourself once again being surprised by how picturesque your evening was. You settled on the couch with Jim, alcohol, and sweets. You both thoroughly enjoy yourself for the evening, doing what you had

suggested all along; watch some dumb shit, get drunk, all that good feeling junk.

But now it's gotten late.

5. The Sleepover

“If my count is correct and I mean, it’s probably not…” your words come out well despite the buzz you felt. “We’ve both been drinking fairly…heavily…” you pause to try to take a moment to figure out how to word your next question, but you blurt it out without finesse, “Are you staying the night?”

“I had planned to,” he admitted. “I’ve got my stuff out in the Blazer.” he goes to grab his coat to go fetch his bag.
“I don’t have to worry about you getting back home now. Now it’s officially a sleepover.” you say, smiling and leaning over the back of the couch.
“Sleepover it is.” he tips his hat and goes out to the car.
You slide over the back of the couch and get the cigarettes out of your purse, you head to the sunroom to smoke. Jim finds you a few minutes later, you have a cigarette in one hand, a glass of wine in the other, feet propped up on the railing. The moonlit you brilliantly.
“Good idea,” he says, lighting up a cigarette. “I probably have, so forgive me, but I feel like I haven’t been driving home the point enough as to how gorgeous you look tonight.” he says, leaning into the padded chair next to you.
“You’ve mentioned it.” you say, leaning your head back on the circular chair. “I’m not tired of hearing it yet though.” you let out a low laugh.
“You’ve been amazing tonight,” he said, you couldn’t tell it, but he was just drinking in all of you with his eyes.
“Me? Psh.” you take another drag. “You planned all this, you’re the amazing one. I’m just someone who conned you into being their friend, for these perks, clearly.” you grin to yourself, “Talk about a long con.” You lift your head back up to give him a funny look but instead, you get caught off guard by the sight of him silhouetted in the moonlight. Smoke swirls around him, his hat is still on and he’s looking at you with an unreadable face. “But I guess that means I should tell you how handsome you look tonight too.” you say, with doe eyes. You can see his mouth draw up into a smile.
“I never get tired of hearing it either,” he laughs and takes a drag.

There are a few quiet minutes between the two of you. “Can we talk about the night of the accident?” he says, out of nowhere, cutting the pleasant silence.
“If there was ever a time, it’d be now, wouldn’t it?” you say, curling up and facing him.
“It would seem so.” he says, exhaling smoke.
“Go on. Lay back here with me, let’s talk. ” you say, sloppily reaching out to pull on his shoulder. He leans back in the chair next to you. His long legs stretched out, his body settled.
“What do you remember from the night of the accident? Before the car accident.” he keeps looking out the windows, long lost in thought, you can see his mouth in a tense line underneath the shadow of his hat.
“Not much, unfortunately,” you admit. “There are pieces. I know we were working late, I remember the forest fires, but that’s all I can really say that’s solid.” He nods and draws his mouth.
“Can I tell you what happened?” he asks, looking down at the floor.
“Of course,” you say, propping up on your elbow. But you didn’t quite know what you were in for. He takes a deep breath.
“Everyone else had left, it was just us. We were both going on over 24 hours of work. The fires made the lights go out in town. So we went to my office and lit the emergency candles and went over the maps and paperwork from the past few days, we were beyond exhausted,” you nod. “You were going on very passionately about something and I got distracted watching you speak.” he pauses, remembering the good parts about the moments before the accident. “We were both looking over the desk, you stopped talking and looked over at me. We were inches apart.”he uses his finger to emphasize the closeness. “I fought very hard with myself not to kiss you." The dream. It wasn’t a dream at all. Does that mean it was a memory trying to come through that you’d lost? "I thought I would mess things up, like I always do. So I closed myself off and shot down your idea, made you go home.” he finishes and his face is pained.
“So that’s why I left…” you say, starting to piece things together. He looks over at you. “That makes so much sense.” You respond, distracted, a determined look on your face as the dream comes back to you. “I’ve had this recurring dream for months now. It’s exactly what you’re saying, which means it’s not been a dream…” you stare into the darkness, he sits up after you do.
“You didn’t tell me anything about that.” he sounds offended.

“I’m not going to tell you all my dreams, Hop, that’d be very boring for you.” you say, dismissing him. “I can’t believe the dreams were… memories?” you say low, lost in a flood of thought. “I need to go… do…something.” you slide from your chair, trying not to let all the repercussions of what you’d just realized make you freak out and disassociate. You go back inside and sit on the couch, near the fire. Jim comes in, sitting close to you.
“You alright there, sweetheart?” he asks, wrapping an arm around your shoulders and rubbing your arms.
“Yeah, I’m just a little…shakey.” You try to calm down and start to fade out of your anxious trance. Initially missing a very important piece of information. “You wanted to kiss me?” you ask after a few minutes of silence, not facing him.
“Yes. Desperately." you turn towards him and grab his hand, his face is so sad. He gives a weak smile in return. "That’s why I’m so guilty about what happened. If I’d just listened to my instincts things would’ve gone differently. You wouldn’t have left and gotten attacked.” his brows furrow and his eyes close. “When I saw you in the hospital, I-” he stops to swallow hard. He takes both your hands and you make intense eye contact. “You were so…” he searches for the right word, ”broken. I didn’t know if you’d make it, and you would’ve died thinking I was a total dick.” you couldn’t help but crack a smile.
“Well I still think that.” you bop his forehead with yours, he smiles back at you for a moment.
“You would’ve died thinking I didn’t care anything about you.”
“I know now.” you say, pouting a little, he looked so forlorn.
“Do you?” he asked, his face slightly annoyed.
“I mean, afterward…” you pause, the magnitude of the situation settling in, heavy on your chest. “I don’t know what I would’ve done if you hadn’t been around.” now your face was sad too.
“I made a promise to myself that night in the hospital. The night we -” he raises your hand and kisses it. “I told myself I would tell you all this. How I’ve felt.” he stops and leans in close, looking at you intensely. “I realized I had a lot of shit to deal with before I’d be worth a damn to anyone, especially someone as good as you. I wanted to take care of you so you’d know I wasn’t some cowardly asshole who is incapable of communicating emotions and dealing with intimacy.” he slows, as his anger towards himself starts showing through in his voice. “And I have almost hated you at so many points

in this past year." You both let out small breathy laughs at the same time in response.
"In my defense, we're both difficult people to deal with."
"I know. You helped me learn how to communicate all that deep, dark shit I hate about myself."
"Those are my favorite parts." you say in a sigh as he continues.
"Through all those fights I never once thought about not coming back." you were the one who was getting misty eyed now. "I had to tell you this I-." he squeezes your hands."I've wanted to for so long. I didn't want to blow it because I don't know that I can live without you at this point and it's fucking terrifying." he admits. He finally stops with the self-reflection and looks up to see you visibly affected by his words. Your breathing has picked up slightly, your cheeks are wet with a few stray tears. You didn't know what you wanted to say, there was so much. "You don't have to say anything if you don't want to." he says softly. He was being so raw and it made your heart thump so loudly you heard it in your ears. You nod and his thumb finds your lower lip as he moves his fingers from wiping your tears, lingering a few seconds before moving along, back to your unspoken language of hand-holding. You bring his hand up to your chest as an affectionate gesture, and he can feel your heartbeat in your chest. "Your heart is racing baby." He says he puts his palm open on your chest to make sure you're alright and you quietly nod. He looks back up at you and smiles so softly as he takes your hand and puts it on his chest, you can feel his heart racing too.
"You okay?" you ask weakly, he nods. You open your mouth to speak but you're feelings are all over the place. You're ecstatic, you're surprised, you're sad, you're happy, the emotions just keep coming in waves too strong. This had been a hell of a night and words were failing. "I'm having trouble thinking of what to say." you admit, eyes still wide and full of tears and surprise.
"You know that's fine. It's…a lot to take in." he says, kissing your hands and moving to the end of the couch, raising his arm for you to lay next to him. A weak but happy smile washes over your face. You hadn't done this since your back surgery. He used to prop up to help you be able to sit on the couch and watch movies, which you loved. The discs in your back made it painful to do that unless you sat in a very specific way, and he had made sure you could still do your favorite thing, even if it meant him being uncomfortable for hours. You were starting to feel stupid for not being more aware of his

romantic motives. You easily slide into position. You bring your legs up under you, as his arm falls over your back and you sink into his torso.
“Can we just lay here for a minute?” you ask, snuggling farther into his arms, playing with the buttons on his shirt, tracing patterns across his chest.
“No problem at all.” he says, his voice deep, reassuring. He is petting you, playing with your hair. His head laid up on the back of the couch. When did you fall in love with Jim Hopper and when were you planning to tell yourself about it? Did you love him? How could you not? But when did this happen? How was this going to work? Did you say you loved him? Did he even love you that way or what was all this about? You closed your eyes and tried to control your thoughts as they all screamed at you at once. What it eventually came down to was, is this what you wanted? The answer coming from every ounce of your being was a resounding yes, this made perfect sense. You give your intrusive thoughts one last final shove out of your mind. You sit up, feeling more stable. He props up, you’re still in each other’s personal space. “You up for talking about it?”
“Yeah,” you use your fingers to run up and down his chest as a distraction so you could think and not look into his eyes, making your head start spinning again. You take a deep breath, it was your turn to admit things you’d been hiding, he’d done it now you have to.
“ I…I want, this. I want, you.” the words still aren’t coming to you as easily as you wanted, so you turn to look at him.
“Can I share something with you?” he asks cautiously. You nod enthusiastically. “There’s a song that you love, that was on an album you told me to listen to. You used to use those songs to express how you felt right after the accident, remember?” he motions for you to scoot so he can get off the couch. “So I want to do that for you.” you nod, almost crying again. How was he doing everything right? He’s hitting everything you care about. He has to be in love with you. He slides off the couch and you watch him move across the room, your heartbeat in your ears again.
“Well, it’s already in here.” he laughs, amused by the happenstance of the situation.
“You listened to Al Green like I suggested?” you cooed, clutching your chest, a whine in your voice, you couldn’t hide how moved you were by the gesture.
“I’ve listened to most of what you’ve suggested actually,” he says,

fixing his shirt and extending a hand your way, “Come here.” he says sweetly. You start to stand, he hits the record player and one of your favorite songs starts pouring through the speakers. You hear the first notes of “I’m So Tired of Being Alone” and you practically float into his arms, you can’t help it, this is your weakness. He wraps an arm around you, taking your other up and starts slow dancing with you. You feel your cold heart lose the war and melt as the music hits you.
“This isn’t fair at all, Jim…” you practically purr into his chest as you sway.
“Why is that, baby?” You feel the urge to shudder at the pet name. He’d never called you that until today. It felt nice.
“You’ve denied me a dance for years. You put on a favorite song after professing all this to me and now…” he takes you and spins you slowly, lovesick fool look on his face, putting your back against his chest. “This…” you say softly as you sway to the beat. You shut your eyes and lay your head against his chest. He lowers his face so close to the nape of your neck. You suddenly remember the dress you’re wearing and it’s lack of coverage. You let out a heavy sigh and feel his arms wrap around you completely. He starts to mouth the words he wants to convey to you across your shoulders.
‘I’m so tired of being alone, I’m so tired of own my own, won’t you help me, girl, just as soon as you can…’ you feel the heat spread through your body. It’s been so long since you’ve felt this.
“I can’t help but feel like you’re trying to seduce me, Jim.” you laugh a lower register laugh than you’ve heard from yourself in years. What he was doing was working for you on so many levels. He laughs low into your ear.
“What gave me away?” he whispers, smiling against your ear. You reach your hand up to the side of his face. He holds your hand and starts kissing it and onto your arm. Your eyes roll back into your head as you just enjoy this moment. You said you’d let yourself have a good time tonight. You could think of no good reasons not to give in to this. You pull away after he returns to nuzzling your neck and shoulder. You turn to face him and place his hands low on your hips and start to move them back and forth, hanging your hands off his shoulders. You watch him watch you, licking his lips and looking at you how you’d imagined he might in all those late night fantasies. You let the tension build. It was so thick between you it was practically visible. He looks back up to your face, sees you watching him like he’s been watching you. He pulls you in close, his hands

slowly roaming down onto your ass. He grabs your soft body like he's making sure you're real. You put your hands on his chest. The records single repeats.
You slowly turn from him, he holds his arms out for another dance and you shake your head and point to the couch. He gives you a look that hits you right in your core. How did you not see how sexy he was before? You let him sit and then sway over to him. He wasn't expecting you to slide down into his lap, honestly, neither were you, but he watches your body like a predator. You mouth some words, as you wrap your arms around him, his hands already touching anything he could. "I'm tired of being alone here by myself now." you whisper to him, he pulls you in close by the back of your head, your hands all in each others hair.
"…in my dreams, nobody but you baby…" He mouths against yours as you both collide with each other for the first time. Your lips start slow, like neither of you were sure if this was happening. You push your body against him, he pulls you even closer. You both start making out like hormone fueled teenagers. As the music picks up, so do his hands, he's all over you, his hands have found their way up your dress, you feel his calloused fingers run over your legs, butt, back, arms, chest, and all the way back again. You're both breathing heavily with small moans escaping into each other's mouths. You pull apart so you can catch your breath. Eyes darting over your features, taking in the messy hair, swollen lips, and heaving chests. "You're so god damn sexy." he growls, pulling you back into another heavy kiss, he makes his way down your neck and you let out a groan. You feel him smile against you. His hands roughly grab your ass, holding you down as he kisses down your chest, he rubs his face in between your breasts, breathing deep. "You smell so fucking good." he groans again, and every sound coming out of his mouth is just making you wetter. You moan at his words, his mouth devouring the cleavage spilling out of your dress. He slows and starts placing open mouth kisses all over your chest like he wants to eat you alive.
"Jim…" you let out in a whisper. He raises his head, placing light kisses up your throat. You look down at him. "I'd like to take this to the bedroom." you suggest, planting another slow kiss on his lips.
"Anything you want, baby." he says, kissing you back for a few minutes before hoisting you up and carrying you to the bedroom.

You're still wrapped around his large body as he opens the door to

the bedroom and shuts it with his foot. He doesn't stop kissing you. You don't know if you could stop if you tried. You recalled all the times you fantasized about this and how silly you'd felt. He couldn't do that, you'd thought to yourself, always taking yourself out of your own fantasy. But you had underestimated Jim before, and now you knew better. He places your feet on the floor at the end of your bed. He starts taking off his shirt and you start to shimmy out of your dress and he stops you.

"I want to be the one to take that dress off you." his voice dark and deep. His words alone were making your clothes itch to come off. He moves in close to you. "I've been waiting so long for this, I'm going to make sure I do this right." he says, running his fingers along the neckline of your dress. You shudder. He'd accessed something you had never felt before.

"So you making me wait for it, huh?" you ask, looking up at him, your eyes heavily lidded, your kiss-swollen lips pout slightly. He lets out one of the sexiest laughs and takes your hands away from his belt.

"I'll let you do whatever you want to me, sweetheart. But you gotta know…" he starts to pull down the shoulders of your dress. "…the things I'm going to do to you are worth the wait." you helplessly let out a combination of a low whine and groan. He keeps the same sexy look on his face, a smugness that knows it can back up what it's saying…and god, it turned you on. He reaches around your dress, popping your strapless bra off and throwing it across the room, his eyes not leaving your body. He gropes at your now freed chest, his breathing picks up. He starts aggressively kissing you again. You're bombarded by his experienced mouth and hands, and he drags down the top of your dress, exposing your tits as he grabs your ass, lifting you slightly as he does so. He pulls his upper body away from yours, he lets out a low groan, licks his lips and watching your chest rise and fall. "God damn baby…" he says as he dives face first into your chest. His mouth feels like it's everywhere. He grabs one of your breasts and his mouth attacks one of your nipples and the sound you make is almost as sexy as his reaction. He groans into you as he sucks and licks and rolls your nipples over and over, each time sending the sensations straight to your center. His other hand makes its way up your dress, he goes slow, kneading his way up to the apex of your thighs. He moans into your skin again, feeling how wet you are against his hand as he grabs you, his fingers pushing against you. You

let out the loudest moan yet. He pulls back and very quietly suggests, “Lay down on the bed for me.” he plants a quick kiss to your lips, and pulls down the rest of your dress as you turn to crawl up onto the bed, he gives your ass a playful smack as you hear the thud of his shoes being kicked across the floor. He moves across the bed to you, sliding in next to you, propped up on one arm and running his hands across your stomach with the other, he hovers over you. You lay under him, he moves his upper body across yours, he nuzzles into your neck as you exhale and wrap your arms around his wide shoulders. You look up and can’t see everything, but the light from the window is highlighting his large frame. Another picturesque moment to add to the day. His broad shoulders and chest weighed you down, you sank into the bed together as he started with the open mouth kisses on your neck. You make small closed mouth noises, he comes up, holding his lips over yours “I’ve been waiting a long time to hear you make those sounds, don’t hold out on me now.” he starts to kiss down your neck again. You leave your mouth open and soon every other breath makes a noise as he makes his way down your chest. He was certainly earning the noises. After becoming thoroughly acquainted with both of your nipples, his head moves up and his hand moves down to your panties. They’re the last thing to go. He starts rubbing you over your panties, you moan into his mouth. “This what you want baby?” he asks before going any further.
“Yes.” say between kisses, “I want you so bad it hurts.” you plead. He groans loudly, you can feel him, hard against your thigh, he presses himself against you. You did very literally ache from what he was doing to your body.
“I’ll take care of you, baby.” he licks up your neck as he slides your panties down your legs and throws them away from the bed. He doesn’t miss a beat and dives his fingers in between your thighs, encouraging you to open them wide. He repositions himself. He distracts you with a slow, hot kiss, and make a straight line to your clit where he starts slow circles.
“Fuck…” you breathe out. He eats up your noises, the circles getting faster with each roll of your hips. He slides his hand down, slowly pushing two fingers into you. You throw your head back, making a pitiful, lustful noise and he watches you fall apart underneath him with dark eyes.
“You’re so wet,” he coos into your ear, curling his fingers and picking a rhythm, pumping into you. You make obscene sounds. Your hips

start to shift involuntarily, you become more vocal, your orgasming starting to build. “So tight,” he groans, pushing deeper. He starts grinding up against your thigh, you snarl your lip and slide your thigh up and down his pants. You’re in the home stretch of your orgasm now. Your moans are coming with almost every thrust of his fingers.

“Jim…” you whine for him. He makes a low, satisfied noise into your ear. “I’m getting close.” you say breathlessly. He makes an even sexier, darker noise as he breathes into your ear.

“Fuck, ” he says under his breath. “Come for me baby,” he adds fast circles to your clit with his thumb, as you start to feel like you’re vibrating. “Come on baby, let me feel you.” he starts roughly kissing you on the lips. You loudly intake a gasp of air, your head falling back.

“Jim…I’m so fucking close.” you moan into his mouth and he moans back, his enthusiasm not overlooked.

“That’s it, you gonna come on these big fingers? You gonna take my cock this well, baby girl?” his words send you falling hopelessly over the edge. You gasp out his name and the word fuck in cycles as your body shakes and you tense around him, so hard it hurt. Your body hadn’t come like this in decades and you felt it everywhere. Your moans turn into heavy breathing, you bring your head back up from it’s thrown back position as you find Jim watching you with wonderment in his eyes. You’d waited for ages to have someone look at you like that. He was still slowly moving his fingers in and out of you, coming to a stop, making sure he’d worked every last bit of this orgasm out of you. You looked into each other’s eyes for a moment as you caught your breath. You don’t know if it was the orgasm or the oxytocin, but you knew in that moment, as he was watching you come down beneath him, that you had it bad for this man. “You okay baby?” he asks, places a small, sweet kiss on your lips.

“Yes. Yeah.” you murmur, laughing a little. “You got a little bit of a mouth on you, Hop,” you say in a low, taunting tone. “I love it.” you grin. He smiles a cocky, handsome smile.

“You’re fuckin right I do. ” he laughs against your lips before he starts a slow, building kiss. He has you making obscene noises again in just a few minutes. You reach down for his belt buckle and start undoing it. You undo his pants as he just watches you touch him. You slowly reach into his pants, under his underwear to wrap your hand around him. He felt just right, you somehow knew he would. Now it’s

his turn to throw his head back as you slowly take out his cock and start stroking him. He lets out a satisfied sigh. You snake your way down his body and before he raises his head to see you, you've already gotten your mouth around him. He hisses and his jaw goes slack. He looks into your eyes as you bob up and down, your hand working the rest of him. "Fuck baby…" he sighs out, his eyes are lost, he's yours. He starts out a group of long, low moans. He's more than hard now, you pop off of him and crawl up his body. He reaches out to roll one of your nipples on your hanging breasts as he reaches down to take off his pants. You stay on your hands and knees, waiting to read what he wanted to do next. You see him lay back a moment, still working your nipples and stroking himself. He looked magnificent laid out, the long lines of his body you just followed with your eyes, as you turned your focus to his face, bottom lip bitten as he drinks you in. He quickly lays you on your back and plants himself between your legs. He's just hovering over you now. He leans over you, weight on one arm as he grabs your hip with the other, bringing one of your legs up and almost around him. You feel his weight on you, you feel him breathing, his heartbeat pushed up against yours and you feel safe. You felt full and loved and vulnerable. He drags the head of his cock to your lips and across your clit, over and over, until you're moving your hips against him. He takes a deep breath, preparing himself, giving you a concerned look. You nod multiple times, knowing he's checking to make sure you still want this. You're quivering. You felt that dark, animalistic need growing inside you.

"We've waited for too long Jim, fuck me." you whisper, keeping eye contact.

He no longer hesitates and deepens the kiss, he pushes against you, slowly filling you up in one solid motion. You make a pathetic, needy noise, you dig your hands into his shoulders. It was just what your body wanted, you both fit together easily. He waited inside you for a moment, as you both let out a short string of swears, trying and failing to keep eye contact. For a minute it was the perfect combination people speak about of pleasure and pain. The noises to express your fondness for what he was doing to you soon followed. You let out a loud whiney moan. He stops kissing you for a moment, "Does it hurt baby?" he asks, slowing down and reaching down to rub your clit.

"Yes," you whine, you felt his body freeze, "but it feels so fucking good." you finish, arching your back as he ravishes you. He's kissing

you everywhere, he quickens his pace, staying on your clit. “Fuck, Hop.” you say, reaching down to grab his ass as he starts pounding into you. “Your cock feels so fuckin’ good.” you mewl at him. You hear him growl as he grabs your legs, wrapping them around him as he goes in deeper, pushing you into the mattress. You let out a small cry as he bottoms out in you, he lets out a low, masculine laugh, knowing now what your noises mean, he latches on to one of your nipples with his mouth. He starts to grunt as he bottoms out in a steady rhythm. You’re both getting close. He releases your nipple as you felt the waves of pleasure building between you.

“Yes, baby. You gonna come for me again?” he buries his face in your neck near your ears. “You’re so tight, so good, fuck…” he breathes out in huffs. You start to nod as you feel your orgasm moving in closer. “I’m not gonna last much longer in this perfect little pussy, baby.” You start really moving your hips, pushing back on him and getting louder with each turn of your hips. “You’re killing me, sweetheart.” he whispers, finding your mouth with his again.

“I’m so close, Jim.” he grunts, deeply slamming into you in response. You let your moans fall out of your mouth, uninhibited. He eats them up and gives them right back to you.

“Look at me, baby.” he says, you put your hand on his chest and feel it on the horizon. His eyes go dark, his brow furrowed as he feels you fluttering around his cock. “Yeah, let me feel you come all over this cock.” He groans out, pumping into you. You hold his gaze as you cum. Hard. By the helpless noises that came out of both of your mouths as you came, you knew you were crashing down around him. He changes his pace to a slower, deeper thrust and you see stars. He is so intensely focused. You let out a moan every time he hits you. He’s eating it up, he’s sloppily kissing you between moans, your hands all over each other’s faces and hair. “I’m coming baby, ” He announces, dropping his head and pounding into you, screwing his eyes shut.

“That’s it Hop, come for me baby, fill me up.” you say in the moment, it seemed you’d delivered your line perfectly as he lets out an exasperated series of grunts and groans through clenched teeth and does just that. Seemed he was also a fan of a filthy mouth. He kisses you again, deeply, as he finishes in you with slow pumps. Your skin is on fire, the air is electric and you continue to just lazily make out as he eventually goes soft and you untense. He retreats from you, both wincing, he falls back onto the bed next to you. After listening

to the sounds of heavy breathing as they slow and start to fade, you find you're both grinning like idiots. You look at each other, you blush and share a laugh.
"I didn't hurt you did I?" he asks, slightly out of breath still.
"Not at all," you reply, moving your hand to lay against his thigh, not wanting to move yet. The cold air finally registers to your senses and makes you shiver. He grabs a blanket off the bottom of the bed and wraps you both up. You lazily pet each other, both emotionally and physically exhausted. You mingled your fingers through his chest hair, his skin was so hot against your hands. "I guess I don't need to buy that space heater now." He raises his head up to look at you. "If you stay here with me like this, anyway," you say, subconsciously asking him a question. He kisses your forehead.
"I'll be here as long as you'll put up with me." he says, resting his face in your hair. You sigh heavily with content. You're both starting to fall asleep, wrapped up in each other, post-coital bliss. How nauseatingly romantic this was, was your last thought before you fell into a deep sleep.

6. The Honeymoon Phase

Summary for the Chapter:

> Dealing with the 1 year anniversary of your almost life-ending accident, you find out Jim has had unknown motivation for taking care of you this whole time. Will you, as two broken people, meld together to fix each other, or will it break you both irreparably?

You wake up to an empty bed. You could be a very long, heavy sleeper so this didn't surprise you. You sit up, blanket under your arms, covering your naked body. You glance at the mirror on the dresser, your hair is huge, your eyeliner from the night before has turned you into a very cute raccoon.

You run your hands through your hair, use the blanket to rub off the stray eye liner and you don't care enough to do much else. You hear the shower turn off, the clock reads 9:00 AM. You realize it's Friday, still a week day. Dammit. Jim had to work. Somewhere inside you pouted because you didn't want this love bubble you'd put yourselves in to burst just yet.

He walks into the bedroom, rubbing a towel over his hair, shirtless. A goofy grin spread across his face as he see's that you're up. "Morning." he says, making his way over to you and kissing your head. You and your raccoon eyes give him a sassy look, but you don't really care about acting tough around him as much now. He's literally tenderized you.

"Morning," you rasp, sleep still heavy on your voice. "You have work?"

"I told them I'd be in late and out early." You heart flutters. "I've instructed them to not bother me unless absolutely nessacery for the rest of the weekend." he wiggles his eyebrows at you.

"Good." You reach over the edge of the bed to reach for a nightgown and pull it over you. You sit up on your knees on the edge of the bed, he leans in and runs his hands down your back to your ass just like last night. You give him the big, pleading doe eyes for leaving.

"Don't get me wrong, I don't want to." he says, kissing you lightly.

He pulls his face away and gives you a funny look. “You’re being so nice this morning.” he grins, as you bite your lip at him. “You are usually a monster after I wake you up.” he openly laughs, and you smack his butt.
“So rude.” you bump his hips with yours. “You’ve never woken me up after fucking me the night before.” your hands roam over his hips and you squeeze.
“I would’ve done it a long time ago if I’d know I wouldn’t have to deal with your bratty ass for at least 2 hours after you wake up.” he gives your butt a good smack before his hands grab yours as you try to hit him again. You open your mouth in a false look of offense.
“You’re such an asshole, Hop.” you say through laughter as he kisses you again.
“You love it.” he says, leaning in to kiss you deeply. You nod into the kiss.
“Yeah.” you mumble against his lips. He lets out a low groan.
“I gotta go now baby or I’m not gonna leave.” he gives you a squeeze. He smells so good. He pulls away to put on his shirt and boots in the living room and you follow him. You felt a little high from the sex last night and the new electricity running between the two of you. “I shouldn’t be gone that late. You think you can make it without me?” he says in a cocky tone. You lean against the back of the couch as he grabs his hat off the rack. He slides in confidently against you.
“I think I might live.” you say, fussing with his beard, shaking your head at him.
“I’ll be back as soon as I can.” he gives you a quick kiss.
“I know first hand that place doesn’t run nearly as well when you aren’t there, I get it. Go on, handsome, your people need you.” he looks down at you, a little sleepy, but the fire you two had started last night was still burning, you could feel it. You grab and place his hat on his head and button up his coat as you speak, “I’ll be here waiting for ya, Chief.” you say with a flirty glance. He lets out a heavy sigh as he brings his hands up to your face and kisses you. It’s briefness not affecting the intensity you felt as he breathed you in.
“I don’t want to go in.” he growls and you let out a deep laugh. You push him away gently.
“I know you don’t, that’s why I’m not acting on what I really want…"you laugh and start smacking his butt, herding him towards the door. ”…and I’m making you leave.“ you both laugh as you smack him in the direction of the door. He’s opened the door and

moved to the porch to escape you. You reach over to the side table and throw his pack of cigarettes at him, leaning in the doorway.
"You're an angel." he gives you a boyish grin and kisses your cheek before making his way to his Blazer. He gives you a final look over before he shuts the door and leaves the little love bubble you'd been floating in, he had to go be Chief Hopper now, not the love sick fool you'd gotten to encounter last night.
You shower, your muscles aching from the drinking and exertion from the night before. You clean, you eat, you settle down to enjoy this huge projection system. Then the phone rings. It had only been a little over 2 hours, you guess Hop really meant he was going to make it brief.
"Hey…" you say, expecting a sexy rumbling voice to return your greeting.
"What did you do to him?" you hear a womans voice in a hushed tone.
"Huh? What?"
"Hopper. What did you do?" It was Flo.
"I didn't do anything," you say unconvincingly. "Why?"
"He practically waltzed in the damn door this morning, he hasn't yelled at anyone. Now you explain that! What'd you do?" you can't hold back your laughter.
"Oh, that…" you trail off, she could probably hear the mischief in your voice.
"I'm not stupid, I know what makes a man act like that."
"It's an improvement, is it not?" you say optimistically.
"Yes, it is. But everyone else in the office has noticed. It's suspicious." she goes quiet.
"Oh, yeah, I remember now, I know why he's acting weird." you wait for her to get impatient.
"Yeah? And?" she's shouting in a whisper now.
"It was probably all that fucking we did last night." you manage to get out with a straight voice. You hold back the receiver from your ear.
"BRANDI LYNN!" you hear her squawk, if she was trying to be quiet to hide what she was talking about, she'd failed. You belly laugh at the use of both your names, no one had called you that since you were a child. You used to hate it, thought it gave away what white trash you were right off the bat. As an adult, the stereotype attached didn't bother you as much.

“Yes, Florence?” you ask rhetorically.
“I knew it.” she hissed. “I knew it!” I hear her yelling away from the phone, you wipe tears from your eyes as you continue to work through how funny you’re finding this. You hear her yell for Jim. “I’m going to give you two a talking to!” she announces.
“Aw, don’t give me a hard time, Flo. That’s his job now.” you start laughing again.
“The mouths on the both of you! It’s like I’m talking to your mother sometimes, I swear. You both are the biggest pains in my ass and if you two are together then I don’t even know how I’m gonna make it to 65.” she exclaims in an angry whisper and hangs up. You continue your fits of giggles in cycles for the next hour, just hearing her reaction over and over in your head.
You get out your journal and settle into a warm spot in the sun room. You’ve commandeered Jim’s shirt. You cozied up with your slippers on. You drink coffee and contemplate. You record the events of the last 24 hours. After you feel you’ve purged everything into the entry, you go to look at the clock in the living room. You’d been writing for well over 2 hours. You think of Jim and in that moment the phone rings. You answer it in a much less phone sex operator way this time, but it is him.
“Hello?”
“Hello, darlin’.” he coos.
“Hey, handsome.” you purr back. You were being such children.
“You mind telling me what in the hell you told Flo?” he asks, humor in his voice. You start laughing again.
“She kept asking why you were in such a good mood, I told her I didn’t know, but eventually I said I remembered why.” you pause in your story for dramatic effect.
“And?”
“I told her it must’ve been all that fucking we did last night.” you hear him spit out, what you were assuming was coffee and he lets out a loud laugh to match your own.
“You didn’t put it that gracefully, did you?”
“Verbatim.” you proudly chirp.
“You’re a real piece of work you know that? Putting me through that interrogation.”
“If she gave you the what for, imagine what I heard. She used both of my names.” you let out a sigh after the laughter fades.
“Oh yeah, I’d forgotten about that, you two-named little country

mouse." he kids.
"Yeah, yeah. Get it out over the phone, hoss. Talking real big when I can't reach you." you listen to his low laugh.
"I wanted to let you know I'm on my way out."
"Good. If you're gone much longer, I might start missing you." you say jokingly.
"I'll be home real soon, baby." he says in a low register.
"Bye Chief."
"Bye country mouse." you hear him laughing to himself as he hangs up the phone.
Just a few moments later, the phone rings again.
"Hello?" you ask, not sure who to expect at this point.
"It's me again." Flo commands. Time for round two. She must have been waiting for Jim to leave to call.
"What is it?" you ask.
"We did not finish our conversation, dear. You're gonna tell me everything. Well, not everything…" she says quickly. "Jim is tight-lipped about it but I think I came on a little strong."
"Yeah, I would guarantee 100% that you did." you laugh again.
"Come on, I've been waiting for this, I have to know how it happened." she demands. Wait a minute…
"Waiting for it?" you ask. You hear her make an unsure noise.
"I might've known about this before you did, dear."
"Flo." you scolded, only a bit surprised, she always knew everything before anyone else did.
"I know. I'm not guiltless here either you little minx." she picks at you. "I don't know what timeline he's given you, but he's been crazy about you even before the accident whether he'll admit it or not, stubborn ass. I knew before either of you did, by the way. The looks you'd give each other when the other wasn't looking." she tuts at the thought. "Like you were teenagers, the both of you."
"I didn't even know until last night Flo." you said in an argumentative tone.
"Well I've known you for a long time dear, whether you were in denial or not." she sassily snaps back. "I didn't want to meddle directly, you're both so stubborn I had to just let you two wear each other down eventually."
"You gonna lie to me like that? I don't believe for a second you didn't want to be involved." your tone was a bit judgy.
"I didn't want to push either of you, dear. I didn't want to ruin it for

either of you. Or have you get mad at me for meddling in your personal affairs."
"I'll buy that from you at least."
"Thanks for the good faith." she pauses. "After the accident, he was a mess. He was already a pain before that and I got tired of him being so damn depressed. I confronted him about it, and thus a sort of alliance formed." she says happily.
"You've been working with him to try to get with me." you state. Clarifying you understood.
"Just a little bit, dear. Most of last night was him, believe it or not." she says impressed.
"That explains a lot. Especially after what he told me last night."
"What did he tell you, dear? Was it terribly romantic?"
"I guess I'll start from the beginning, I don't know if I can fit all this in before he gets back." you stretch to look out down the driveway.
"Well you're going to talk up until the point he's at the door so, you better just get going now." she says sassily. You smile and give her what she wants.
You'd highlighted all the important parts and she made you promise you'd meet her soon so could get more out of you. You fed the fire and paced around the room, feeling better since you had shared what happened last night with someone else, what were your friends going to say? What would the whole town have to say about it?
You hear the rumble of the Blazer. It cues a different feeling than it did just a few days earlier. A brief flight of excitement had turned into a deep, burn. You were starting to convince yourself you'd actually fallen in love with him, it scared you. You dismissed the thought as he darkens your door. He lets himself in. His face falling into a much less angry expression as he makes his way to you after removing his outer layers.
"Howdy, baby." he chuckles lowly at you, hugging you in a way that he picks you up off the ground slightly.
"Howdy." you say heavily accented, mocking him, making fun of you. You take his hat off, sitting it on the table. He removes his boots as you walk back to him.
"Stealing my shirts already, huh?" he asks, his hands already roaming over the soft fabric.
"I wanted to do it sooner." you admit and beam at him. "I think I look better in them anyway." he lets out that low laugh you're becoming a huge fan of.

“I would have to agree.” he plants a soft kiss on your lips.
“I can’t say stuff like that anymore, can I?” you tilt your head. “I don’t have to lie about how attractive I think you are anymore, so I can cut the shit I suppose…” you chew the inside of your cheek. He surprises you with a loud laugh that crinkled up his whole face.
“I’m looking forward to finding out what other stuff you’ve been hiding from me.” he grins and plants another kiss on you.
“Well according to Flo, this union has been written in the stars for quite some time. You want to elaborate on that, Hop?” you say, confronting him in a playful manner.
“She sold me out.” he says, tsking and shaking his head. “Yeah I’ve had a thing for you for a long time.” he admits, dropping his head.
“Shame on you for making me think you didn’t like me.” you swat at his chest.
“I told you, I was scared, I didn’t know how to tell you. How was I supposed to know someone like you would be romantically interested in me.” You cock your head to the side.
“How could I not be?” you say, looking into his eyes. He almost blushes. “I mean, sure you’re an asshole sometimes but so am I, so…?” you shrug. “I don’t want someone that wouldn’t push back. You would give me shit all the time and I would give it right back. It’s hard to find someone you can call a fuck face one minute and then be laughing about something stupid a few minutes later.”
“You’re real fiery once I got to know you. You’ve got a mouth on ya.” he laughs and plants a sweet kiss on you. “I wouldn’t want you any other way.” his voice lowers, he grazes his lips across your jaw to your neck. “I need a woman who is going to put me in my place when I need it.” He raises back up to your face. “You didn’t fall for my macho bullshit for a second, called out every bad line I ever threw your way.”
“Some were pretty bad too.” you say teasing him, you both lazily kiss and talk.
“Definitely.”
“I thought you were confident, but moody as hell, closed off, ladies man when I first started working there.” You raise your arms up around his neck. “I thought you were bad news.” you start kissing him back more deeply. “I’ve never been more happy to be wrong.” he hums against you, pulling you tightly against him. “What’d you think of me?” you pry.
“Honestly?” he pulls away from your kiss. You nod. “You were

distant and defensive, but I still found you really sexy in a smart, quiet kinda way." he shrugs, returning to kissing on you.
"Not an unfair assessment. I took a long time to warm up to you." you go back to lazily kissing him.
"I did get one thing right about you from the beginning." he smiles at you again. "I thought you'd be a great fuck." he says, sliding his tongue into your mouth. You squeak as he takes his large hands and lifts you onto the table. You both just keep kissing, just sighing into the other, hands gliding over every inch they could. A small moan finds it's way up your throat and out of your mouth.
"When did you get so fucking sexy, Hop?" you say breathlessly as he kisses your neck.
"Puberty I'm guessing." he mumbles, you laugh at his bad joke.
"I'm serious." you pull his face up to yours. "It's like I'm letting myself see all this," you motion with your hands to his entire body. "for the first time." You rub your hands up his chest to his shoulders "Like these big broad shoulders…" you rub your hands over his chest "this bulk over those hard muscles…" you bite your lip as you paw at his soft stomach and around to his hips. "…and don't even get me started on all this…" you exclaim, smacking at his ass and rubbing your palms over his thighs. He looks down at you, smirk on his face as you shower him with compliments.
"Feeling's mutual, baby." he hums into your ear, his lips on our earlobe, his large hands slide back to your hips and ass.
"You handsome asshole. Now I'm just going to be chronically dehydrated because you're around." He belly laughs at your words, eyes closed.
"Now you understand what it's like to have to be around someone you find so fucking sexy all the time." he's thoroughly amused with your openness about your new feelings. You blush and his mouth finds its way back to your neck.
"I'm afraid there's only one thing more important than getting you back inside me right now, Hop." he groans at your words.
"What's that baby?" he says between open mouth kisses to your chest.
"I"m hungry." he pulls back, hands on your hips.
"Well we better take care of that so I can get back inside you." he says, the lust still heavy in his voice. You visibly squirm from his words.
"Unf. I'm starting to have a new appreciation for that mouth of

yours.” you take his bottom lip into your mouth, he groans.
“You’ve not even seen everything this mouth can do, sweetheart.” he strokes your bottom lip with his tongue.
“I’m looking forward to it.” you slide off the table and pull him to the kitchen. “But now, I need to fuel you up.” you turn and go through your cabinets. His hands grab at the backs of your thighs as your shirt hem raises with your movements.
“Don’t worry about me, I’m good to go.” he starts massaging your hips.
“Have you eaten anything besides donuts and coffee today, Hop?” he reaches his hand between your legs from behind and doesn’t respond.“ Hop…” you say, scolding him.
“No.” he says, pouting into your hair, retracting his hand, accepting defeat momentarily.
“That’s what I thought.” you look back at him, laughing at his childish behavior.
“But there are leftovers!” he begins to argue as you turn on the oven and dig through the fridge.
“You had to deal with work, let me play homemaker while I’m in the mood.” you toss him a beer from the fridge. “You go change, smoke, whatever you want while I make dinner real quick.” He stands in the kitchen, beer in hand. You wrap your arms around his neck. “Let mama take care of you for once.” you insist seductively. A low hum radiates from his chest. He responds by kissing you deeply, hands getting in one last grope. You both pull back and retreat to your assigned activities for the time being. There were still 3 nights left in this weekend, you had a feeling your body would thank you later for fueling it properly before the beating it’s going to take. You got goosebumps just thinking about it.

You summon Jim to the dinner table, you’ve thrown your hair up messily to cook, pieces of it hanging down around your face. You slide a full plate in front of him.
“I knew you needed real food.” you smirked, as he inhales his mashed potatoes. He shrugs and keeps eating.
“Yeah, unfortunately, you’re usually right.” he looks over at your pleased expression.
“That might be better than your dirty talk.” you laugh. He shakes his head in amusement.
“Better wait until we’ve had sex more than once to make that call,

honey." he smirks as he shoves more food in his mouth.
"You're right."
"Wow, that does sound nice, you could be onto something there." now you're shaking your head at him. You wait for him to finish, he leans back, rubbing his hands over his stomach. You stand to start taking the plates to the sink. "How'd I get so lucky to get someone that can cook like you."
"Now that's better than dirty talk." you say sincerely, giving him a noisy smooch on the cheek. Now it's his turn to look pleased.
Before you even get the water on, he's behind you again, already back to where you were when you made him stop earlier.
"I like your hair like this." he says, pulling back to look down at you, tucking the loose strands behind your ears. "Makes it easier to…" he starts planting single kisses on the back of your neck, you shiver. He reaches around you, you've given up on doing the dishes already. He unbuttons your shirt, sliding the shoulders down to kiss across your upper back. It felt so nice.
"Dammit, Jim." you say, exasperated. "You're making me a mess." you admit. He lets out a small noise of approval.
"I've never gotten to tell you how sexy your accent is sometimes." You open your eyes, feeling a blush come to your face.
"No you haven't…" you tilt your head to the side, being taken off guard by the comment.
"The way you say my name when I'm touching you, with that little twang…" he lets out a low, low growl from his throat.
"Jim…" you respond, your eyes closing again as he moves his mouth back onto your skin.
"Yeah, like that." He closes his eyes and takes a deep breath in, pulling you to him completely. "Mmmmm" he murmurs, going back to your naked shoulders.
"Jim…" you start turning to him, speaking softly.
"Yeah?" he responds, just continuing to work your exposed skin with his mouth as you turn.
"I'm a little sore from last night…" you hesitantly start to explain.
"Thought you might be." he reaches between your legs and rubs over you. You let out a small pleasurable noise. "We'll take it real slow tonight, baby." he says with that dark tone that hasn't failed to get you wet yet. He continues a slow, back and forth over your panties. He starts kissing down the front of your unbuttoned shirt. "No reason to rush." Your heartbeat picks up as your blood rushes to your core.

He's unbuttoned the shirt completely, his hands roaming your hips as he kisses your lower stomach. He places one single kiss on your cloth covered center. He looks up at you. He starts kissing you over your panties, lazily moving his lips and tongue. You rock your hips in response, leaning your arms back onto the countertop. He pulls your panties down from your hips, kissing your stomach while you both shift to remove them. He dips down, lifting your leg onto his shoulder. He kisses his way up your thigh as you position your hips to open yourself up more to him. He seamlessly moves from the open mouth kisses on your thighs, parting your lips and continuing onto your clit. Warm, soft, slow movements, like he was trying to work the soreness out of you. Your body was responding to his every move. You start to get lost in the sensation, leaning your head back, one hand moved to Jim's head, slowly moving between your legs. You rest on your elbow, using your free hand to roll your nipples. You can feel the bad sensitivity fading away, making you forget about the pain. You remember to not get too lost in your own thoughts and look back at Jim. He pulls away from your clit to work his way towards your opening with his tongue, once again, massaging every muscle. He changes his position and pushes his tongue into you. You breathe in loud, shaky breaths and he groans into your pussy. He wraps his big arms around your thighs, holding you as he explores you with his tongue. The silence in the cabin makes the small wet noises you two make seem even more intense.

"Fuck, that's good. " you let out in a low moan, your bottom lip pinched between your teeth. He slowly opens his eyes and you watch each other. You clench around him as you feel another wave of pleasure flow through you. His fingers and arms grip tighter around your legs, he moves back up to your clit, his tongue lapping against you. Your body tremors slightly, you're close. Through an open, panting mouth you tell him you're close. He keeps the same pace and focused stare on you, his intensity making you melt for him. Your thighs tighten around his head involuntarily, you're so close. He pushes back against your rolling hips, holding you close, letting you know he's ready. Your back arches and you roll into him, as you start to peak. You're about to fall over the edge, you're chanting yes over and over through clenched teeth, your brow furrowed. Every breath becomes a loud moan. You whip your head back down towards him, hand in his hair with a tight grip as you push against his face with determination. You see his brow heavy, his eyes dark. Your mouth

opens with a tremble as you come. He joins in on the groans that escape you. You can feel your body shaking but you can barely tell with his strong grip on you. His head follows your hips as you start to slow, coming down. You give a final shiver, his mouth moves over your thighs, leaving a glistening trail behind it. He stops kissing your thighs and lowers you back to the floor when you give him an approving nod. He moves back up your body, taking your torso into his arms, holding you up against the countertop. “I’m okay.” you say, slightly shaky. You knew he was about to ask anyway. He lets out a small, low, amused sound, he reaches up to push some hair out of your face. You reach up to his and wipe his beard, trying to clean him up a bit. He starts buttoning your shirt back up for you, as you’ve already started your usual post sex shivers and you let out a big yawn.
“Am I boring you?” he laughs and pulls you into his chest, rubbing your back. You let out a small dumb laugh.
“Ha. No.” you wrap your arms around him. “I’m used to falling asleep after orgasms, I’m also just tired.” You look over at the clock.“ It’s not even that late.” you laugh at yourself and lay your head on his chest.
“If you want to go bed early I won’t hold it against you.” he states, resting his hands on your hips. You let out a thoughtful sigh.
“In that case, yeah.” you pull back and stretch as you walk into your bedroom, picking up your panties on the way thru the kitchen. You get everything settled to go to bed. “You gonna sleep with me, Hop?” you ask him, leaning out of the bedroom door, he’s still in the kitchen.
“I hope so.” he says, switching off the light as he follows you to bed.

7. Control Pt. 1

Summary for the Chapter:

> The Honeymoon phase didn't last long, it's back to reality for you two. An evening out goes very wrong, but you both seem to reach an understanding as to how to salvage it.

Sunshine drowns the room when you wake up again, Jim is dead asleep, his body like lead on the bed. You wondered when the last time he got to sleep in was. You managed to slide out of the bed, having a few close calls with waking him. You knew you couldn't have gotten out without him knowing if he hadn't been exhausted. You shut the bedroom door quietly. You start your morning, as usual…

You wake up a few hours later, the room is dark and the moon is high in the sky. You've had another odd dream, possibly your least favorite yet since it involved Jim. You weren't in this one but it still felt strange, like the memory Jim told you about. Now you were just paranoid that every dream meant something.

You look over at him, you're thankful he's in a deep sleep. The worst way to wake up after the second night of sharing a bed together would be with you having another nightmare and him witnessing it. You worry about what you might say in your sleep because there's someone else there to hear it now. You let the worry pass. The red glow of the alarm clock reads after midnight. You slide out of the bed to go to the bathroom, you clean yourself up, disheveled from your dream. Jim still hasn't moved as you climb back into bed. He stirs as you slide against him, facing him, craving the comfort his warmth brings. He makes deep sleepy noises, laying his arm on you. He resumes his snoring after a few minutes. You weren't sleepy anymore, you were used to going to bed early, staying up for a few hours in the middle of the night and then going back to bed. But now that you weren't the only one in the bed, you couldn't really do that. So you lay your head on his chest, listening to his body. You found his slow breathing soothing. You doze off, focusing on the relaxing rising and falling of his chest.

Sunshine drowns the room when you wake up again, Jim is dead asleep, his body like lead on the bed. You wondered when the last time he got to sleep in was. You managed to slide out of the bed, having a few close calls with waking him. You knew you couldn't have gotten out without him knowing if he hadn't been exhausted. You shut the bedroom door quietly. You start your morning, as usual, you start the coffee and make two servings of food, setting his aside for later, you knew he'd be hungry when he woke up.
After your journaling in the sunroom, you decided you probably need to get a good stretch in while he was still asleep. You lay your mat out in the living room. You start to try to focus on your breathing. You're in the middle of a hip stretch and you hear the door click open. It's almost noon and out lumbers Jim, his hair sticks up, his eyes only half open.
"Mornin'," he mumbles, rubbing his face.
"Mornin'," you answer, raising your head to greet him. He answers with a groan. "You were sleeping so well I didn't have the heart to wake you." you let him know as he acclimated to his surroundings. He pours himself some coffee into one of the Hawkins Police mugs you have in your cabinet. He makes his way over to the couch and sits, watching you, sipping his coffee. You switch over to stretch your other side.
"What's…all this" he waves his hand at you, his eyes narrowed.
"Physical therapy exercises," you say, lowering your head again to deepen the stretch. "It keeps my muscles from getting too tight." you explain.
"Ah," he says, nodding, "Looks impressive." he grins, taking another drink. You let out an amused noise.
"You should be impressed. This is hard." you laugh and shake your head, hopping up and out of the position. You go and sink into the couch next to Jim, Sliding your cold feet under his warm legs. He moves his arm to rest on your legs, stroking them. "You sleep well?" you ask, wiggling your toes. He nods, humming a yes. "I'm glad. You needed it from the looks of it." He nods in response again as you smooth down his hair.
"Yeah. I don't know the last time I slept that many hours straight." he lets out a long sigh, continuing to pet on you.
"Is it too soon to ask what you might wanna do today?" you lean forward, wrapping your arms around your knees, pulled up to your chest. He looks around the room, in thought.

“Didn’t have anything in mind. I’m guessing you do though.” he turns his face towards you, a lazy smirk drawing up the corner of his mouth.
“I thought…” you cross your legs, sitting up in your seat. “We could make our first official public appearance together.” you look to him, eyes wide and nervous about his reaction.
“Really?” he says, an impressed look on his face.
“Yeah. I have a feeling I might like being escorted by big Jim Hopper everywhere a lot more now.” you laugh, resting your hands in your lap. “I thought going out for just a drink or somethin’ might be fun.”
“Where do you wanna go?” his voice is starting to sound more awake.
“A bar? Your choice. I don’t care, I just feel like getting out of the house.”
“Mmm. Alright. I think I can manage that.” he pats your knee before standing and grabbing his cigarettes. He takes one out of the pack with his mouth, motioning his head for you to join him outside. You take one from him, following him onto the back porch.
The sun was high, warming up the air by this point in the day. You smoke in comfortable silence. Silence was a trait that you loved in Jim, he spoke with his actions and you’d always been a fan of that. You let the sun hit your face, your hands resting on the banister, holding yourself up. He slips an arm around your waist, his thumb drawing lazy circles against you.
“Thanks for letting me sleep, by the way.” he says low, planting a single kiss on the top of your head.
“You don’t get enough rest, baby.” you say reaching up and playing with his beard as you look out into the woods.
“Yeah, no shit.” he laughs, taking another drag.
“You gotta take care of everyone else but yourself, don’t ya, Hop.” you smirk as you turn towards him, his arm now around your front. It’s a conversation you’d had before, about both of your tendencies for self-destructive behavior and ignoring your own needs.
“I know, baby” he lets out a heavy sigh, starting to rub his hand up and down on your side again.
“I’m not criticising.” you rub his chest, letting him know there’s no anger behind your words. “I’m glad you got to sleep in. You looked so nice all laid out in my bed.” He just looks down, giving you an amused smile. “Almost didn’t let you sleep in.” you bat your eyelashes at him, letting out a content sigh. “But I thought, I can

always wake you up with my mouth around you some other time." your hands make their way down his chest as you speak. He squeezes you closer, giving you a slow kiss on the lips.
"Thank you, baby. I really did need it." his hand rubs your lower back. "But keep that idea for another morning," he says, chuckling as he tosses his finished cigarette. "You eat yet?" he asks, slowly letting you go and moving into the house.
"Yeah, your breakfast is wrapped up on the counter," you reply, walking after him. "I guess I'll get a shower. I didn't want to go out too late, I'll just take my time getting ready." You walk up to him, opposite side of the counter, as he eats his breakfast.
"Fine with me." he says with an encouraging smile.
———————————————-
You stand outside of the Blazer in the parking lot. You slam the door shut as Jim makes his way over to you.
"This feels so weird." you admit, your eyes narrowing. You'd been out with Jim before, just the two of you, but now it felt like everyone's eyes were burning into you. You knew you were being paranoid about it. You look up at him as he wraps his arm around your shoulders. He's watching you with that amused light in his eyes.
"You good?" he asks, using his hand to squeeze your arm as you walked.
"Yeah. I'm just a little nervous for some reason," you admit, embarrassed. "I feel like we're about to walk into school after I've taken your letterman jacket or something." you say low, your eyes surveying your surroundings. He lets out a laugh and gives you another squeeze.
"That's one way to look at it, but don't go getting worked up over nothing, sweetheart." he opens the door for you.
"I'm not, don't worry." you sigh and cross the floor to the bar together. He takes your jacket off of you and you both settle in near a booth in the back, right by the bar. The music's good, you're a few watered down drinks in and you've started to relax. You like watching how Jim moves, seeing how he's acting differently from before. His possessiveness radiates off of him, big, strong and self-assured. He doesn't have to say a word to show that you're his. You surprisingly find your thoughts drifting to how certain body parts are reacting to this new energy coming off of him. You hadn't been one to get turned on by feeling like someone's property before, actually, exactly the opposite. You weren't really sure how you felt about it

now truthfully. Maybe it was because you knew Jim so well, that this was basically the same as him saying I love you, so the controlling aspect didn't feel like it was coming from a bad place. Jim taps his beer bottle onto the table top, regaining your attention.
"Too many of these, be right back." and he slides away to the bathroom. You realize the time and that you should switch over to something without alcohol in it. You go stand at the bar after ordering two sodas. You're watching the people in the room, moving slightly to the music when your gaze is broken by an old and unwelcome face.
"Brandi?" he asks loudly. You meet his gaze with a low brow and straight expression. "Is that you?" he asks again, looking you over.
"Hello Will." you say through tight lips.
"When did you get back? I haven't seen you in like, 20 years!" he exclaims.
"I've been in Hawkins for a few years now." you don't look at him, you just keep scanning the floor, trying not to get more annoyed.
"Well you look great, hon." he leans in closer. You scrunch your nose at him.
"Ugh." You reply, refusing to look at him.
"What? You too good for me now? You go and leave and now you can't be nice?" he moves his arms as he speaks, invading your personal space.
"I don't want to talk to you Will, please go away before something bad happens to you." you say calmly as you turn to meet his face again.
"Psh! What're you gonna do?" he lightly pushes your arm, taunting you, you feel your anger build in your gut.
"I'm telling you to please, fuck off." you say sternly, your muscles tensing.
"Guess all that fucked up shit that happened to you after you left turned you into a real bitch."
"Shut the fuck up, Will. You don't know what you're talking about." you turn to head back to the booth, forgetting about your drinks. Jim should be back anytime now and he might literally kill Will if he hears what he's saying to you. You're stopped mid-turn by a hand tightly gripping your arm. You turn and see the hand belongs to Will. You freeze and the rage boils up into your throat like acid.
"I don't like it when people touch me." you say with a growl. You were really not trying to have to beat up a guy for thinking he can

touch you, speak to you that way, like you were barely legal again. The muscles in the back of your neck are so tense, your chin lifts up in anger.
"That's not what I've heard about you." He twists his grip on your arm. The ringing in your ears starting to chime, your heartbeat thumping like a drum. He tries to pull you in closer and you hold your ground, he settles on leaning in. "I can get a few guys together and have 'em watch since that's what I've heard you're into." he runs a finger up your other arm. This was it. This was how he died, you could see his obituary in the Hawkins newspaper already. William David Bayes. He fucked with the wrong bitch.
You take one deep breath and you aim. You kick him in the balls and he doubles over.
"Fuckin' bitch!" he spits out, reaching one arm out, stumbling and trying to grab you, you easily move out of the way. Your brain feels like a bomb just went off, you're seeing red and you can't control yourself. You're stupefied by his words, that he would have heard any of the rumors that went around after your stepfather died. Fucking small town gossip. The thoughts pass as you start to focus on what Will's bones breaking underneath your knuckles will feel like.
"HEY!" you hear from across the room. It's Jim's booming voice, moving across the crowd like an aftershock. More specifically, it was his Chief Hopper voice.
You give Will a hard kick to the chest and knock him to the ground without even thinking.
"HEY! HEY!" you hear Jim shouting as he makes his way through the people on the floor. You are in a blind rage and you don't even react to his voice. It rumbles in the distance like thunder.
Your knees are on Will's chest, you've knocked him on his back, you've gotten in two good direct hits to his face. As you pull your arm back for a third, you feel Jim's big hand wrap around your forearm and pulls you back quickly, swinging you away by the waist. He's holding your back against his chest. You're shaking and crying tears of frustration, breathing heavily through clenched teeth. Your hands bloody from breaking Will's nose.
"What in the hell is wrong with you?' he says in an angry low voice, trying not to draw more attention. You just shake and cry and keep trying to make a break for Will. "C'mon…" he says under his breath, dragging you outside. He takes you around a corner and pushes you against the side of the building, holding an arm over your chest. He

watches the door as you try to control your breathing. You're sobbing from too many emotions, mostly anger. You always cried when you were overwhelmed, anger included, and you always hated when it happened.
"Just keep breathing, sweetheart." he says distracted, prepared to deal with Will when he came out after you, but he never did.
The bartender emerges, holding your things.
"She okay?" he asks, keeping his distance. Jim turns to look at you.
"Well? Are you?" he asks quietly yet sternly. You're no longer sobbing, just sniffling, your lips quivering. You nod and try to wipe your nose, shame setting in. "Can I let you go?" he asks, the pressure lessening against your chest. You nod and look away. He releases you and you turn from him, ashamed for losing your temper again. This wasn't the first time Jim had to pull you back from the edge.
"The guy said some really nasty things to her Chief, she warned him. But he kept running his mouth.."
"Yeah, I saw him swing at her but that's all I caught." he rubs his hand over his face.
"He deserved worse. Don't go too hard on the girl, it was all him." he gives a weak smile and walks over to you, handing you your purse and jacket. "I'm sorry about that, I won't be letting him back in here again." he pats your arm hesitantly. You half smile back and nod.
"Thanks." you say softly.
"If you want to just go Chief, that's fine with me, I'll have one of the boys take care of Will, he won't be bothering anyone else tonight, she did some damage to him." Jim gives him a strong nod and he disappears back into the bar. Jim looks up at the sky, letting out a noise of frustration, hands on his hips. He reaches for your arm, and pulls you to the Blazer, opening the door and herding you inside. He gets in, and the silence is thick and heavy.
"I'm sorry Hop…" you start, wiping your face with the tissues you had in your purse. He shakes his head back and forth, not saying anything. You can't read his face, you're guessing he's angry, you're angry too. You drive home in silence.

8. Control Pt. 2

Summary for the Chapter:

> The Honeymoon phase didn't last long, it's back to reality for you two. An evening out goes very wrong, but you both seem to reach an understanding as to how to salvage it.

You're back in the cabin and you immediately go to your bathroom to change, wash the blood off your hands and cry. You try to do it quietly, trying to let out the emotions that had followed you home. You open the bathroom door and Jim is standing by the door frame, waiting.

You sit on the edge of the bed defeated. You'd really fucked up. So much for the honeymoon phase. Jim silently comes to kneel in front of you, his hand on your knee, he grabs your chin. You realize he's looking you over for injuries.
"He didn't hurt me." you say in a whisper.
"He better not have. I can't believe he was stupid enough to even touch you." he keeps looking, his face is still not readable but you don't feel like he's going to hurt you anymore. "You scared the shit out of me you know that?" he goes back to holding your chin so you have to look at him.
"I'm sorry." you sniffle, you stare into his eyes, they look a lot like yours, wounded and wet. "He just said some things that…" your breath hitches with emotion. You wipe your face, trying to act not as soft and messy as you felt. "He grabbed my arm and I just had to hurt him, Hop, I couldn't stop myself." you let out a heavy breath, adrenaline now just a memory. Jim pulls you into his chest and it takes everything in you not to start crying again. His hand rubbed the back of your head, his other, your back. He rocked you a little, squeezing you.
"I saw him take that swing… and I wanted to kill him." he kisses the top of your head, holding his grip on you tight. "No one does that to you," he says low, angry, possessive. "I get so mad when I can't keep you safe." he groans. "I want to make you understand how much I hurt every time you do, so you'll just let me take care of you and quit

fighting me on it." he loosens his grip on you, he puts your face in his hands. "If I wasn't the Chief they would've had to call a hearse after he touched you. That sleazy, no good, piece of-" he stops as you look back into his eyes. Your face still damp, the light shines off of your trails of tears, your eyelashes are long and wet, your mouth and cheeks pink from rubbing your face. Your gaze is full of apologies. He doesn't need to tell you why he's hurting, you already know. He shuts his eyes after studying your face. You put your hands on his forearms, lightly rubbing your fingertips on his skin. You felt so much hurt alone and now you are feeling his too. All you wanted to do was make it go away for both of you. He clears his throat, "I can't lose you. Please don't get yourself hurt. I love you too much…"he clears his throat, "it hurts too much to see you like this." you swallow heavily and your eyes, wide, connect with his.
"You love me?" you ask. You'd never heard him say it before, you'd just thought you'd felt it. Your heart fluttered, you forgot about the ache in your chest for a moment. He looks at you slightly confused.
"Of course I love you." he lets one side of your face go, pulling you closer. He looks at you as if it was the most obvious fact in the universe. "Why would you even ask that?" He looks at you questioningly, wearing a worried expression.
"You've never said it before." you quietly explain. The look on his face says he hadn't even realized it.
"Oh, well, then… I love you." he says again.
"You love me." you give him a small smile.
"Yes," he says, a smile wanting to draw up the corners of his mouth as he watches your face soften at his words, he wants to keep talking until all the pain disappears. "You're mine now." he softly kisses you. You feel warmth in your face for the first time since you'd started crying this evening. You let out a small content noise. "Don't ever question that." he commands. He kisses your eyelids, you keep them closed as he kisses your cheeks and your nose. The words felt so good, like silk rubbing up against your insides.
"That makes it hurt less," you say, opening your eyes to his. You let out a heavy animated sigh, reminded of your actions that led to this bad mood swing for you both. "I hate it when I get mad like that. My head hurts, it makes me feel terrible for days." His hand falls to your shoulder as you look around, making a small noise to express your frustration. You hated losing control like you did tonight. It did nothing but upset you, you had to take his feelings into consideration

now. “I would like to stop feeling so hurt, just for a little bit.” your tone annoyed,“I just can’t stop my brain from doing it sometimes.” you slouch, leaning towards him.
“I know.’ He sighs as he kisses you, slowly, the fire between the two of you starts to burn again. The painful ache of your hurt feelings starts to transform into another kind of ache. You want something different to dull this pain. Maybe you could be the answer for each other, at least for a little while. A great distraction if nothing else. You pull your lips from his.
"I want to try something,” you watch his eyes looking over your face. He’s hanging on your every word. You take his hand and let it trail up your chest to your throat. “We both know I can’t act right, but…” you take a quick deep breath, you glance up at him, placing his hand loosely around the base of your throat. “But I need you to try to make me.” you dip your head to take one of his fingertips into your mouth. He grits his teeth at your actions. You just want him to make you forget about everything, replace it with the best distraction you can think of. You need to learn to let go, he wants more control, maybe you can be the answer to each others problems. You continue to suck on his fingers, making small eager noises as you feel him shift. “If I’m your’s now,” you say between sucks and licks. “Then only you can take care of me, right?"You felt so vulnerable.
He hesitates, his words stuck as his breathing picks up and his body reacts strongly to your words. You give him a seductive glance, making eye contact as you continue moving your lips over his hands.
"Take that control you want so badly,” you say in a breathy exhale. A rumble raises from somewhere deep in his chest. You place his hand back around your neck. You push your chest towards his, your hand grips his arm. “I need you to, baby.” you practically moan into his mouth as one of your hands roams over his thigh. You study his face, you want to watch him give in. His jaw is tight, his eyes are closed in an attempt to process the things you’re asking for. You’ve almost talked him into it, you try to seal the deal. “I need you to fuck me so hard I can’t think about anything else.” You speak slowly. You feel his grip tighten around your neck at your words, you let out a tiny choked noise to let him know he’s on the right track. His eyes slowly open, a deep abyss looking back up at you. He takes one deep breath to steady himself.
“Fuck,” he whispers in a long breath as he holds your gaze. He grits his teeth, looking up at the ceiling, “That mouth is going to get you

in trouble," he huffs out, "You promise me…" you feel his breath on your face, his body language already intimidating. "…you let me know if I go too far."
"I will, I promise," you answer a little too eagerly. "Unless I tap out, you don't stop. " you say low, a direct challenge. He hisses and starts to rise. He guides you up the bed by your neck, then he starts to push you onto your back. His knee rests by your hip on the bed, leaning over you. You place both of your hands on his. You watch his face as he looks down at you, wondering where this version of you had been hiding. His free hand trails down your chest. He starts unbuttoning your shirt. He speaks low and intensely through clenched teeth as he plucks open the buttons, one by one.
"When you decide to act badly now, I have to deal with the consequences," he exhales steadily, you can see he's trying to let his guard down and give you what you need. "So I need you to listen to me. Okay, baby?" he looks at down at you, speaking to you in a tone you hadn't heard since you were young. Your guttural reaction to fight it causes your chest rise and fall quickly. "If I have to teach you this lesson twice, you will not like it next time." he leans in, pressing the sides of your faces together, close to your ear. "But I will," he says with force. You can feel the electricity flowing between your bodies again. He punctuates his point by ripping loose the final button on your shirt. "Every time you want to be bad…" his voice grows louder. You're trying to keep your face neutral, but you have a feeling you're failing. "I want you to think about what I might do if I find out." his hand is still around your neck, every time he shifts his fingers, you feel a small thrill."When you want to go play badass…" he says directly and loudly in your face, his grip on your throat tightens. "You don't. I take care of it." as he speaks, his hand squeezes to emphasize his points. He lightly trails his fingers down your body, just barely touching you. "Quit acting like you're on your own, I'm the one that takes care of you now." He runs his hands over your thighs, his fingers trailing close to your panties. "You don't put me through that again, understand?" you just whimper in response, you didn't expect his words to do exactly what his hands could, but even faster. "I take care of it from now on." he pauses briefly, his tone is harsh, assertive, "I take care of you from now on." You see the hurt peaking through his eyes for a fleeting moment, "You're mine." he suddenly slaps his hand against the inside of your thighs, you let out a muffled noise accompanied by your entire body tensing against

his big hand blocking your throat. You press your thighs together. “Do you understand?” he drags his lips against your skin, eventually finding their way to your own.
You nod, you know he feels your pulse race against his palm.
He shakes his head at you, “No.” he states calmly, and again, he slaps your thighs. Your body jerks and you make a small noise. “No, baby, we use our words.” he says in a condescending tone. It makes your toes curl in defiance. You’re trying so hard not to sass back.
You give a small angry noise, huffing out of your nose at him. Under any other situation the grin that spread across his face would’ve gladly turned you on, but the smug look made you angry. Your pupils grow large giving away what you really want, despite your body language resisting.
“Oh, now we don’t want to behave again.” he sounds amused with you, he grabs your hip and twists them towards him, one leg was half thrown over the other. He runs his hands over your thigh and hip, then gives your cheek a hard smack. You squeeze your eyes shut in response. You hadn’t been touched like this in recent memory. Despite how much you’re starting to like it, you glare at him. You can feel that he’s enjoying himself. “That wasn’t even hard, baby.” he taunts, “You want to reconsider?” he asks, rubbing his hands over your hips and ass, he kisses his way across your hip slowly moving over the red splotches forming. You don’t say anything, you just glare. But you could watch his mouth move across your thighs all night. He moves so fast you can’t react until after he’s already laid another open-palmed smack to your ass, he grips the flesh tightly afterward. You let out a noise that could be either pleasure or pain, your mouth panting open. “You keep this up and you’ll be stuck here all night.” he rubs circles on your skin with his hands. You throw your head to the side, not looking into his eyes. Your instincts were telling you not to give in. But your body had a very different set of needs right now. You had to figure out how much you were willing to give in to him, you had a feeling that complete surrender might be your best option.
You manage to get out a reluctant, “Yes.” But you knew it wouldn’t be good enough.
“No, no, no, baby. You know better.” he raises his hand and you flinch, he let’s out a low, mean laugh that makes your body gush. “One more chance.”
“Yes!” you blurt out, looking at him, agitation on your face. You try

to move your head forward as you say it, to emphasize your dissatisfaction for having had said it at all, but his hand was there, heavy and hot against your throat, keeping you in place. Another amused smile appears on his face.
“Still a bit too much sass.” he scolds, adjusting his grip on your neck. He clears his throat, “Are you going to stop acting bad and let me take care of you? Listen to me now? Do what I tell you?” he is no longer shouting at you but has instead decided to try a low and close approach. He pauses for a moment, “You going to act right for me, sweetheart?” the last question he says in a deep tone, not as angry, more suggestive. You look up at him, reluctant submission on your face.
“Yes.” you answer in a low, clear voice. There’s that sexy smugness washing over his face again.
“That’s a good girl.” he whispers and giving you a small kiss before landing another hard smack on your ass. You feel it burn but you try not to react as dramatically, only a noisy exhale escapes your lips. He releases your neck, flexing his fingers. You lay close to each other on the bed, your body is still. With an indifferent expression, he runs his fingers up and down your torso, you move against his touch, too ticklish and it makes you squirm.
“Relax.” he says, leaning down to speak into your ear, not touching you. His body lay close, but not up against yours, with your shirt open you were exposed to him. His hands start making their way down your body, “Spread your legs.” he says low, commanding. You open them wide with just the smallest nudge of his hand. “See, you can listen.” he breathes into your ear. You’re breathing and pulse are still elevated, the tingling throughout your body of anticipation was maddening. He extends the journey of his fingers, roaming over your body to between your legs. He roughly palms you over your panties. You shift against his touch, you’re so tense. “Baby, relax,” he pressed a single kiss on your ear. His breathing is slow and steady, you try to slow yours as well, trying to let go of control. You weren’t good at this part. He resumes working his fingers over you. You close your eyes, focusing on your breathing, focusing on what his hands were doing to you. They run up your stomach, grazing over your nipples, alert against the air of the room, hard from goosebumps moving across your skin. Your hips move lazily as he runs his thumb around your nipples, you let out a small moan. “That’s better,” he says, rolling your nipples between his fingers. “Take your panties off.” he

orders, pulling away from you. He unbuttons his shirt and unbuckles his belt. You both toss your removed items into the floor. He settles back in next to you, this time the line of his body rests up against yours. His hand goes back to between your legs, cupping over you. You hear him let out a long exhale, he pushes some hair out of your face. He doesn't make eye contact with you, he just looks over your body as he touches it. He dips his middle finger in between your folds, you're already so wet you feel like satin around his fingers. He barely flicks over your clit, he waits for your body to relax before he touches you again, he repeats this. The patience shows on his face, he's watching his hands work, thinking of the things he could do to you.

"Hop?" you ask, hesitantly.

"Yes, baby?" he says, affectionately, not stopping his fingers. You bite your lip at the deepness of his voice. He lets out a low laugh at the feeling of your muscles tensing underneath his fingers, feeling the effect he was having on you. He interrupts you, "You like it when I call you that? Baby?" he moves in closer, more of his body lines up against your own. You tense again, involuntarily. He kisses the shell of your ear, you close your eyes and shiver, feeling the breath of his laughter on your neck.

"I do." you say, a smile tugs at the corner of your mouth as his words work their magic over you. You tense again, his fingers do not still. He moves his fingers down past your clit, now aching from his touch. His fingertips push into your pink flesh, outlining your entrance. You whine from the contact.

"Good. I like calling you that." he gives you another small kiss on your ear. "Reminds you that you're mine," he says, his tone shifting into something darker as you tense again. He lets out another low laugh. "I'm starting to think you just like the sound of my voice." there was a touch of lightness to how he said it. Your body reacts to every word he says, it did make him feel powerful. His fingers continue to tease you, meeting together to pinch your clit then slides down the edges of your pussy to your opening, and back again. It was starting to get to you.

"Yes, also a possibility." you pant out as his fingers slowly drive you insane. You both make content noises at each other,almost laughing, letting a less serious moment slip in between the power plays. "But I do like it when you call me baby."

"I'll remember that for when you're good," he says, tone back to

velvety smooth. He brings his fingers back up to your clit. You shift your hips against his touch. “No struggling now.” he taunts, giving your clit a small slap with his hand. You gasp at the sensation. “You’re going to listen to me, so you should work on not moving and only doing as you’re told.” he gives your cheek a very light smack, his fingers running across your mouth, stopping to hold your chin tightly. “If you listen, and continue to act right, I’m going to give you what you want.” he pushes two fingers into you, slowly. You whine against the fingers across your mouth. “But if you don’t, I’ll take it away.” he quickly withdraws his fingers from you. “Understand?”
“Yes.” you huff out past slightly smushed lips. He presses a quick kiss to them before he releases your face. You’re feeling so needy from the teasing he’s putting you through, your skin felt like it was on fire when he touched you. You know this is his intention.
“Good girl.” he gives you another hard slap between your legs. You moan as he starts in your ear, kissing down your neck to your chest. His fingertip so very lightly circling your clit. You’re huffs of breath turn into moans as he taps on you. He moves his fingers up and down your lips again. He was getting hard from the feeling of how turned on you were from this. His mouth moves over your chest, the kisses become hungrier the longer they go on. He works his mouth over your nipple, still grazing a single finger over your clit. Your muscles were aching at this tense and release he was putting them through. You lie as still as you can, but your back arches into the way his mouth is manipulating you. You whine against him, it fuels his motions. “You are making the neediest noises tonight, baby,” he says in a pompous way, his fingers slipping back inside you as you prove his statement right. Your fingers grip at sheets underneath you, your chest heaving. “You hear how wet you are?” he asks as he pulls his fingers out and slaps his hand on your clit again. You flinch and gasp, he returns his fingers to deep inside you before you’ve even exhaled, making you light headed. He’s pushing deep and slow, using the pressure between your hips to make you fall apart.
“Oh, fuck, Hop.” you say breathlessly, already showing signs of annoyance at the slow pace he was giving you. You knit your brow at him. He makes the deepest, conceited laugh against your breast. He slides his fingers out of you, up and over your clit, one fingertip stays on the sensitive bud as his hand pushes down on your pubic bone. Making his way up your neck to your ear, he shifts against you, pressing himself against your leg and you let out another helpless

groan of want.
“Look at you, baby,” he says flicking your clit aggressively with his finger, you make tiny pained sounds, even though it doesn’t hurt. "Look how swollen that little clit is.“ he whispered. He tut-tuts at you as he moves his hand from you to palm himself as he speaks. "You think you deserve this cock already?” You bite your lip at his words, you let out a small, deep laugh.
“No.” you can’t help but smile at yourself, still painfully self-aware in the midst of what was supposed to be dark and sexy. He kisses you before the smiles spread across both your faces.
“That’s how I know you do deserve it,” he says, kissing you a moment longer. Moving away, he leans over the edge of the bed just long enough to take the rest of his clothes off, you can’t hide the need you feel in your expression as you watch him. He sits back in bed, leaning against the wall, on your piles of pillows, his legs apart, his hand grips the base of his cock. “Get up here, baby,” he says, beckoning you with his hand, you roll and make your way up to him, on your knees you sit next to him, awaiting instruction. He reaches over to tweak your nipples, he was still radiating a certain calm power your body was aggressively responding to. You hum against his touch as he strokes his cock with the other hand. You lick your lips and watch him. A smirk on his face, he presses his fingers into the soft flesh around the base of him, he wiggles his cock back and forth at you. “You need this bad, don’t you sweetheart.” A smug smile is the only thing you ever want to see him wear again. Your mouth might have very literally been watering. You look back up at him, your eyes wide, your lip between your teeth, nodding obviously. He gives your nipple a particularly sharp pinch and open-handedly smacks against the same tender spot.“
"Yes! Fuck…” you pant out quickly, exasperated and distracted by the view. You didn’t want to trigger anything that might make him stop what he’s doing.
“Then come here” he nods his head for you to move closer. You start to throw your leg over him. He runs a hand up your thigh as you start to settle down on top of him. He grabs your hip hard, pressing his fingers into your soft flesh. “You don’t get to ride this until I say you can.” he drags the head of his cock back and forth against your soaked center. You let out a cry of frustration and need, pouting and huffing. The same smug smile appears.
“But Hop…” you start to whine. His speed catches you off guard yet

again as his hand slams down on your ass, spanking you again as soon as his name crosses your lips.
“You seem to forget you aren’t the one making demands right now, sweetheart.” you flinch from the hit then you nod in agreement. He starts circling your clit with the head of his cock, you mewl against him. “I told you if you act right, you get what you want.” you nod again, you want so desperately to touch him, you reach out to put your hands on his chest for some respite but he spanks you again. These weren’t the same as the warm-up hits you took earlier, these were hard. Your ass and thighs kept moving after he made contact. You would take each one with a gasp and a slow exhale. You were impressed he wasn’t asking if you were okay everytime he hits you because the noises they elicited from you could’ve been interpreted in many ways.
You retract your hands and look down away from him. No one has ever successfully made you react this way. Maybe you’d just not met someone that made you want to. You hated being weak and submissive outside of sex with Jim. No one before had been able to make your body react the way he does, you hated the effect he had on you but you also craved it.
“Good girl.” he praises, running both of his hands up your body to your chest. You close your eyes and let him do what he wants, you sigh into the motions his fingers work around your nipples. He pulls you towards him with a hand on the back of your head, the other still working away, uninterrupted. You moan into his kiss immediately, your fingers digging into your own thighs so you didn’t wrap your arms around him. You needed him against you. You winced as your fingernails threatened to break your skin, he moves his hands to your thighs, covering yours. “You really need to touch me that badly, baby?” he whispers against your lips. You nod.
“Yes.” Your shoulders slump slightly, trying to release your fingers from your skin. Jim takes both of your wrists, leading your arms up to his chest and around his neck. Your fingers play with the small curls of hair at the base of his neck. He releases your wrists, his hands resting on your hips. “If I let you touch me, will you promise not to sink that wet pussy down on me until I tell you to?” he massages your hips as he speaks, you can’t help but wiggle them in anticipation.
“Yes.” you nod, you don’t hide your eager tone. You feel your heartbeat quicken in response to his offer. He plants one soft kiss on

your lips before he speaks.
“Then touch me, sweet-.” before he finishes his words, you’re on him. You pull his face as close to yours as you can, you mash your mouth against him, giving him the pathetic little moans he wanted from you as you work your tongues in each other’s mouths. Your arms tighten around his head, pulling your chest against him. His hands hold your hips for a few moments as you devour him. He reaches around your hips to your ass, tightly grabbing you and squeezing before his hands slide up your back, pulling you even closer to him. You’re trying not to roll your hips against his hard length as you both meld into each other. You reach down to grab him, moaning at the pulse of his veins against your hand. You rub yourself against the underside of his cock, giving you some much-needed contact. You continue to drag yourself across him, you’re both swearing at how good the other feels..
“I need you so bad,” you say urgently, breathlessly against his lips as you continue your desperate kissing and groping. “Please.” you plead, he growls in response. He takes the loose sides of your sleep shirt and balls it into his fist behind you.
“Put your arms behind your back,” he orders, pulling his mouth away from yours. Your open mouth and heaving chest emphasize the amount of distress this order put you under.
“But, I-” you start to protest. He brings his hand down fast and spanks your ass again, you whimper and pout, doing what he says. He holds both your arms, wrapping the shirt around to hold you. You back is arched and your tits pushed out makes you feel like you’re being presented to him. He reaches down to start teasing you with the head of his cock again. You moan against the unexpected touch.
“Since you asked nicely.” He looks up at you, his blue eyes deep beneath his furrowed brow. He holds you tightly in place by your arms, he gives your clit a few strokes, as he hums with satisfaction as your thighs twitch in response to his touch. After running his thumb over your nipple, he takes your chin making you look closely at him.“Sit on it.” he commands. Part of you wants to slam him in hard and fast, you want to watch him fall apart while you are. But you don’t want to risk hurting yourself. You gulp and take a deep breath. He rubs your thighs with his big hand as you sink down onto him. It feels like you do it so deliciously slow, but you can’t trust your time perception. He huffs out praise as you surround him, your mouth falling open as you finally seat yourself.
“Fuck.” you say, chest heaving, looking down, trying to adjust to

him. His hands find their way to your hips.
“You can move, baby.” he whispers, the edge isn’t in his voice right now, he’s just focused on how you feel. He uses his hands to follow your hips and you rise and fall.
“Fuck.” is the only thing you’ve really managed to say since he’s been inside you. It’s all you can feel and think about. You had wanted him so badly your muscles ached, and now you had him, and that much-preferred ache he brought to your muscles was warming up your entire body, your orgasm now a visible dot against the horizon. He watches you take him in and out, chewing his bottom lip at the sight.
“Yes, Fuck, baby.” he agrees, letting out a low chuckle as he stills your hips. His fingers are back on your clit and you let out a breathy moan at the contact. “You’ve been so good baby, so good.” he coos at you. You feel his hand tightening it’s grip on the shirt across your back as he continues circling your clit. You’re a pouty, bosom heaving mess, feeling particularly naked with your arms back, exposing you like this. “You ready?” he asks, eyebrow raised. He grins at the look of confusion mixing with blown out lust on your face. You curl your lip to ask a question. “I think your words were, fuck me so hard I can’t think about anything else?” You nod. With your hips raised above him, he slams into you, hard, from below. You let out a squeaky cry as your mouth trembles open.
“Fuck, Hop.” you manage to whine out. “You’re hitting so fuckin’ deep, baby.” you warn. He pounds into you again, each making you involuntarily cry out for him. Soon, you’re bouncing off him as he jackhammers into you. You feel like you barely have room to breathe in your body with him inside you like this. His big hands grab at you, latching on, biting down and making you call out. It was like he’d burst a damn open, in more ways than one. Your yowling does not stop. He held your upper body up by your shirt, you were being fucked so hard your body tried to go limp in defense. He rips the shirt away from you and buries his face between your tits, his fingers clawing into your back as he held you so tightly your ribs cracked. He lets his rough persona go, he’s grunting and groaning against your skin, his forehead pressed hard against your collarbone. He eventually slows, having given you enough of his energy that he might as well have run a marathon. As you stop your noises of hyperventilating, he kisses you hard. His hands are on your face, he’s gasping against you as he finds a much slower but still devastatingly effective pace. His fingers find your clit again, the tears that have

been threatening to spill from your eyes finally do. You've never made yourself feel anything nearly this intense before, and you had the tendency to cry when you felt overwhelmed by anything, pleasure included. Jim feels your face is wet and pulls back alarmed. You shake your head before he speaks. "Don't stop." you plead in a breathy voice. He growls and continues bringing you right up to the edge of your orgasm. Another wave of pleasure hits you as he keeps rubbing your clit, kissing you desperately. "You're gonna make me come." you whine pitifully against his lips. He switches his mouth to your neck, covering you with sloppy kisses.

"Yes I am," he growls biting down on your shoulder. You cry out again, you start slamming back against his hips, he starts crying out with every thrust. Your hands go to his shoulders, helping you ride him, he holds you steady. You feel the final wave approaching, and so can he. You start the series of moans he's learned that comes right before you do. He grunts each time your hips meet. "Come on, baby," he whispers against your neck. His fingers press harder against your clit. "Give it up. Show me how badly you really needed this cock." Once again his words give you that solid shove you need to go crashing over the edge. Your legs tremor, they're useless as you're coming. He holds you up, still pumping deep, he was determined to get every last bit of orgasm out of you. He wanted you absolutely spent, exhausted in his arms.

His name escapes your mouth in a high pitched moan as you crash violently around him. He keeps moving his hips as he lets out a loud shout against your skin. His fingers keep moving, more tears fall from your eyes as you realize you're going to come again. "Fuck!" you squeak out, your mouth falling open. He looks up at you from between your breasts. You let out an unusually loud sound for this far into your orgasm so he's thrown off for a second. Once he feels you start fluttering again, he lets out a low, dark laugh that reached right between your legs. He growls against your skin.

"You're gonna come again, aren't you?" he asks in a dark, teasing tone.

"Mmm Hmm" you manage to moan out, you buck back up against him, your teeth are breaking the skin on your lip as you bite down, trying to keep your lips shut and muffle your screams. You make sure you're looking at him when you come. He knows what to do to finish you off again.

“Give me what I want, baby girl, come again.” he growls as he bites down on your shoulder, “You feel so fucking good when you come.” and by then you’re long gone into another orgasm. He moves so he can kiss you through your satisfied moaning.
“God Dammit, Hop.” you almost sob, crying as you shake against him again, completely lost in your love buzz.
“Fuck, baby.” he groans, his pace picks up, he’s close. You’re still heaving and moaning, so when he starts the final race to the finish line a few more tears fall, jostled loose, the ringing in your ears is deafening. You place your hand on his chest, you push back against his wavering hips. You crash your lips against his.
“Make me take it all, baby. ” you whisper against him. You’re panting, your foreheads pressed together. “Show me just how good this pussy feels.” He almost crushes your hip bones beneath his hands, slamming his eyes shut.
“You’re so fuckin’ good baby.” he groans as you bring him in for a kiss. He lets a loud, deep moan escape from his chest as he comes. He slowly pumps in and out of you, no particular rhythm, just floating back into reality together. You kiss deeply, on some new level of intimacy together. You hum and moan against each other. You both default to your preferred method of making out, slow, sloppy and wet. You eventually pull away, your legs having gone totally numb.
“Legs, Hop.” you say as a request for assistance, tapping your thighs. He laughs at your pout and helps pick you up and lay you next to him, as he rolls over to curl up next to your body he grabs the blanket. He lays his body over you protectively. His arm over your upper body, his leg over yours, feet intertwined. He was close as he could get to you, which is what he wanted right now. He lets out a sigh against your hair as he kisses your shoulder.

“Would this be an inappropriate time to say I love you again?” your head falls back in a loud laugh. You put your hand on the side of his face, rubbing your fingers in his beard. Your fingertips linger over his lips longer than they had to. You felt so spent and satisfied, but you still didn’t want to stop touching him.
“Never.” you say as you yawn.
“Well, I feel better.” he laughs. You place a hand on his chest, neither of you can deny the sparkle that lives in your eyes in this moment.
“Yeah me too.” you grin, chuckling and kissing him before burying your face in his chest, breathing him in. His face falls into the crook

of your neck, his breathing slows as his limbs wrap around you like vines. You let out a big yawn.
“Bedtime already, baby?” he asks, pulling you closer, kissing the top of your head.
“Mmm Hmm. You wore me out. Put a fork in me because I’m done.” you murmur against him. You bounce with the laughter emanating from his chest.
“Good. That was my intention.” he lets out a dark chuckle, a hint of the passion from earlier left over in his voice. You feel yourself slipping away, tiny little snores emerge from your parted lips. Jim can’t help but smile and kiss you one last time before you’re fully asleep. He runs his fingers through your hair, your stir with a small groan before you snuggle back into him. He feels an all too familiar pain in his chest when he watches you sleep. There’s a reason he called you an angel. "Love you.“ he quietly whispers against your hair as he closes his eyes.
You don’t say it back. You would blame sleep in the moment, but it was mainly because it terrified you. But for the first time with Jim, you feel that hollow yet full feeling in your chest. There is no other comfort you crave while you’re in his arms. You loved him, but being IN love was a whole other monster. You were in denial about your relationship with that monster. You wouldn’t say you’re in love. At least not out loud. Not yet. Although you felt the day would come sooner than later.

9. Losing It

Summary for the Chapter:

> Becoming increasingly aware of your growing feelings, you find yourself reacting in the strangest possible way to feeling so connected to Hopper.

You're dreaming of a park you don't recognize. You move through the grass, looking around, kids are laughing, parents are finding brief moments of respite on their individual benches around the playground equipment. It's a happy scene. You decide to approach a small girl sitting on the grass, her dress ballooned out around her, her big blue eyes sparkle up at you with a smile as you reach down for her.

You let out a noise of rebuttal as you're pulled out of sleep and back into your body. You feel slightly disoriented, the dizziness reminds you that you drank last night. Maybe you should just accept you're to that age where you couldn't get away with hard liquor this often with zero consequences. As your body aches as you regain consciousness, you remember the fight from the night before and wonder if that's going to cause its usual literal headache. You force open your eyes and remember that there is a large, warm human in your bed with you. You forget your annoyance about being woken up when you feel him breathing on your neck. He's leaning over you, pulling you closer. A throb flows through you as he moves your limp body with one hand on your hip, and you're reminded of the night before. You groan from parts of you being particularly tender as you wake, and partially because his lips are moving on your skin. You stretch and he loosens his grip on you. You yawn and rub under your eyes, adjusting them on his face.

"I let you sleep in." you whine, your eyes shutting as you yawn.

"After last night how am I supposed to keep my hands off of you?" his voice is deep and rough, he hasn't been awake long. You rest your arm on him, humming with a look of agreement. He lovingly rubs your hips and over all the places he'd hit last night.

“Keep doin’ that.” you murmur, petting the hand that was rubbing over your body. He digs his fingers into the muscles a little harder, you let out a small, not intentionally sexual moan.

“Doesn’t hurt?” he asks, planting a kiss somewhere in your hair. You shake your head and make a noise to indicate that it doesn’t.

“No, just sore.” you look up at him sleepily, “This helps.” you raise your chin for a kiss and he doesn’t hesitate to answer. His hands seem to work a heavy sigh out of your body. You relax against him, his mouth moves languidly against you, his big hands working down to your thighs. You wonder what it would take to get to stay right here like this forever. Another throb pulses between your legs, making you ache and tense from the strain of the night before. You let out a small, pained moan.

“What hurts, baby?” he kisses along your jaw, his hands back on your ass.

“Well, if you must know,” your eyebrows raise as you start to grin, “You kissin’ on me is turning me on,” you explain a bit breathier than you meant to. “And certain parts of me are sore from last night so everytime you do something that turns me on it hurts a little.” your voice is just a touch whiney. He stops kissing you but leaves his mouth on you.

“I can stop.” you feel him say against your throat. You sigh out a noise of contentment and shake your head, he starts kissing you again before you even respond.

“I’d tell ya to stop if I wanted ya to Jim,” you say low, moving into his touch. You hum happily as he kisses your collarbone. “You say you wanna take care of me so I was lettin’ you.” you explain, your fingertips running up and down his flexing forearm.

“Maybe you did learn something last night.” he lets out a low laugh, kissing a line between your breasts.

“Last night was…yeah, ” you let out a goofy snort of a laugh, feeling slightly ridiculous at how much you’d enjoyed the night before. “Last night was great.” you run your fingers through his hair, looking down

at him. A mischievous grin is revealed as he raises his head up to face you, his arm snaking around behind your back. “Well, that latter part of the evening anyway.” you add in a low and teasing tone. The hurt you’d felt so intensely the night before was just a memory for now.

“I know you were really upset last night, ” he reaches up to run his hand through your hair, “and not that I support that kind of behavior,” he smirks at you, “But I’m proud of you for defending yourself.” he kisses your forehead. “No matter how angry it makes me, it’s good to know you can.” your chin pushes into your chest, you might’ve blushed at his praise. You smile down at him, openly swooning at his words. He shrugs, deflecting the praise.

“A year ago you wouldn’t have been able to admit that.” you drop your voice to draw him to you, you ask for another kiss with your sultry stare. He nods, knowing you’re right. “Guess you should’ve tried fucking a therapist instead of just talking to one.” you start to release a small laugh and you’re cut off by the deep rumble that erupts from Jim. His chest contracting and shaking the both of you like you were riding out waves on the water. You watch him laugh, the crows feet around the corners of his eyes, the folds around his mouth and nose deepening with his cheeks rounding out, making his eyes almost disappear under his heavy brow. You bite your lip and watch him catch his breath, he rubs his hand over his face, beaming down at you.

“Can’t argue with the results.” he scrunches his nose in amusement at you as he leans in closer. “You have to admit taking on a drunk grown man on your own is impressive, sweetheart.” He grabs your hand with the wounded knuckles, his thumb grazing over them. “Not the smartest idea, but…”.

“It was stupid,” you admit, raising your eyebrows, “But it’s not the first time I’ve broken a guys nose…” you chew the inside of your cheek in thought, your fingers idly running over the soft hair on his chest.

“I’d believe that.” he laughs against your sternum, he rests his face against your body as his arms tighten around you. He starts kissing at the bottom of your rib cage. His lips trecking across the expanse of your chest.

“I had an expectation of bein’ tough when I was growin’ up.” you sigh, watching him. “I didn’t want them to hurt me so I learned how to hurt them instead.” your hand rubs his shoulder as he moves across you.

“Smart girl.” he coos against your skin, pecking up to your neck. You smile and close your eyes. You let out a small moan as you exhale, his mouth and hands distracting you from the negative thoughts. His hand reaches back down to your hips, earning a grunt of appreciation from you. This continues on for several minutes. Laying together, lazily kissing while his hand kneads your butt reminded you of how close you felt to him now. As you exchanged breaths from each other’s bodies through your moving lips, you wonder how you ever lived without someone making you feel this way.

“How much to have you do this all day?” you groan. “Reminds me of when you used to help me stretch.” you murmur with a fondness for the memories.

“Yeah that was never awkward, was it?” he chuckles, his hand moving to the back of your knee, raising your leg. You let out an amused huff.

“Thinking back I’m thoroughly impressed by your ability to not get hard while doing some of those positions.” you move to accommodate your leg being stretched. He moves between your legs, holding them straight, your ankles on his shoulders.

“Who says I didn’t?” he kisses your ankles through a throaty laugh. He takes one of your ankles, pushing it towards you. Once you’d been strong enough to stretch on your own you’d made him stop helping you because you were constantly reminded of how dependent you were on other people, and you had issues with that.

“I might recruit you to help me stretch again.” you groan as his hand runs down your calf, bringing your knee closer to your head. “I think it’ll be much more fun this time around.” he leans in to kiss you as he follows the stretch of your leg.

“I couldn’t push this far back the last time I did this for you,” he kisses the inside of your knee, he repeats this action with the other

leg, you groan, thoroughly enjoying yourself. “I usually have to be inside you to hear that one.” he teases, leaning in to give you small pecks as his hand moves over the inseam of your leg. You land a smack on his chest in response to his words. He then sits back on his knees. “And one of my personal favorites…” he lets your knees bend, then pushes them out and apart. You let out a low groan that turns into a chuckle as he stretches the ache out of your most tender parts.

“Yeah I like this one.” you rush out before another groan escapes you. You try to relax. He’s obviously distracted as he looks down at you, spread open and presented, your knees pushed back towards the bed. The look alone in his eyes is enough to turn you on. He slowly releases his grip on one leg, sliding his hand down your inner thigh, his thumb grazes over your clit, your knees want to close together at his touch. “Mmmmph, Jim.” you whine, your hips shift in response.

“You know what saying my name like that does to me, baby.” he stares down at you with hunger in his eyes. He strokes up against your hood again. You let out a small gasp, which upon exhale turns into a moan as he repeats the action. He licks his lips and continues infrequent strokes against your most sensitive parts.

You greedily take in the sight of him with your eyes. His brow is knitted, focused. His tongue peaks out of his mouth, you notice his chest rising and falling. You bite your lip as your eyes trail lower, and you see his cock twitching, coming to life against his thigh as he hums, running his thumb over your wet center. You wonder what specifically he’s thinking with that look in his eyes. You throb at the thought, your hands moving to your breasts.

He leans down to lick up your slit, quickly targeting your clit with his mouth, sucking you in. He groans, transitioning into open mouth kisses against the sensitive bud. You’re distracted by the site of his tongue working against you outside of his mouth. You don’t even see him move his hand so he can fill you with his fingers.
“Jim…” your voice is quiet, with its signature twang. You reach down to run your fingers through his messy hair. He’s on the verge of working another loud moan out of you when the sudden noise of the phone ringing on your nightstand startles you out of the trance he’d worked you into.

You both still, his eyes glare in the direction of the sound. You continue to live in the few seconds between the first and second ring in denial. You groan loudly and reluctantly remove your fingers from his hair. You frown and motion with your head for him to move so you can roll to reach the phone on your nightstand.

“Yeah?” You answer, you didn’t care how shitty your tone was, you felt whoever was on the other end of this call deserved it for disrupting you. And you were right.

“Hey, Brandi, Chief there?” you hear Callahan’s voice and you place the phone receiver against your chest and let out a shout of frustration. “Yeah, just a sec.” you mumble quickly, holding the phone back to Jim who had slid behind you, hand wiping off his beard. You stay laying on your side while he takes the call. Lots of hums of agreement and disagreement coming from him.

“It’s still the weekend she can’t even take it in until tomorrow anyway,” he explains, his tone annoyed, you could tell why he had been electing to not use many words to carry on this conversation. “Fine. No, it’s,” he takes a sharp intake of breath, “Fuck. It’s fine, Cal just…ugh…I’ll be there.” he shakes his head and easily reaches over your body, his arms long enough to stretch and roughly hang up the phone.

“Well I could hear about how that went.” you say defeated.

“Yeah,” he sighs, moving to sit up on the edge of the bed. You roll towards him, moving to your knees and kissing his shoulders before he had a chance to remove himself completely from the bed.

“I just have to sign some bullshit papers, ” he rests his hand on yours, settled on his shoulder. You manage to get in another kiss to the back of his neck before he stands. Leaning down to kiss you softly on the lips, he says in a gruff voice, “I’ll be back soon, I promise.” he kisses you again to delay the inevitable.

“It’s okay, Hop. Just go and get back to me.” you smile sympathetically. No reason to get mad about it, you’re sure he’ll make it up to you later.

He grabs his clothes off the chair in the corner of your room, hops around the room, tugging his jeans and multitasking, his tongue jutted out just so in concentration. He kisses you one last time for good measure.

“Soon.” he promises again before turning smoothly and leaving your bedroom.

You hear his feet stomp against the wood floors, the pitch changing the closer he got to the front door. You hear the lock click and eventually his vehicle leave. Since you’re already out from under the covers you decide to get up.

Your feet hit the cold floor and your knee gives as you step away from the bed. You easily catch yourself with your hand on the dresser but shoot a scolding look to your leg while you shake it anyway. Guess he really had knocked you around a bit more than you realized. You take another step and stumble again, your shoulder hitting the door frame.

“What the hell, Brandi?” you ask aloud to yourself, resting your back against the door to ease the whooshing sound of your heart in your ears. You don’t move for a moment. The dizzy spell passed quickly, you decide you’ll double your allergy medicine this morning. You pull on actual pants, it was too cold not to. You rub your hands as you put on coffee, and go through your morning routine. You don’t feel that great, you add some generic painkillers to your other usual handful of pills to take the edge off.

You decide to pick up a bit while you have the time, you’re sorting through Jim’s clothes, you figure you might as well wash some of his stuff for him. You thought it’d be a sweet gesture. You’re picking through his pockets and lay their contents on top of your dryer and after you push the start button, you scoop the items into your hands to lay on your dresser. You didn’t know if he needed any of these pieces of paper with his hurried scrawl all over them. You do find something that doesn’t seem to fit in. It’s a blue hair tie, which seems…incredibly suspicious? You scoff aloud to yourself that the very thought would even cross your mind. You hold it up to the window to illuminate it and study it as you walk towards the big windows by the door. You find yourself oddly compelled by this

seemingly random object.

“Why do you feel so…” you squint and shake your head, your vision focuses so intensely you feel dizzy. “…familiar?” you whisper aloud, your hip bumps up against the back of the couch, you barely notice. It’s like you’ve seen this before but where? You’re surprised when you feel your elbow hit the back of the couch as well, you notice your hands have hit the floor, you think you might hear the rumble of the Blazer, but it might as be the ringing in your ears and the sudden headache you feel. Your vision starts to tunnel and you pass out unexpectedly.

———

It’s like you’re in a room full of giant, brightly colored movie screens, spread out everywhere you can see like a kaleidoscope, changing and transforming. Each amorphous blob moves continuously. You move your limbs and as you push through the rippling surfaces of these scenes playing, you can almost feel them. Like they’re a ghost. A ghost of an idea, maybe. Like when you get distracted and a thought suddenly leaves your brain and your dig through your mind for a moment to try to find it. That’s what you could best equate it to. You hear a loud voice, you move towards the sound, you find the same young girl you saw in your dream this morning. You push your hands up against the almost tangible surface of the pulsing, amoeba-like object. It resembled a squishy snow globe. Your fingers break through the thin skin of the scene, a barrier between you and it. You thrust yourself against it, and find yourself back in the park again. You can’t control what you’re doing or seeing but you run up the little girl, scooping her up. You can smell the candy on her breath, see her tiny teeth when she laughs loudly while you tickle her. You put her down and she runs from you but you quickly give chase, her pigtails bounce as she runs from you, giggling. That’s when you notice it. The hair tie. You have the urge to look at your hands, where the hair tie should’ve been but you can’t move. After a few rounds of the capturing and running, the little girl starts to make a funny noise. The screen starts to get blurry and it feels like you’re losing focus. You see a woman run up to the little girl you both try to comfort her as she looks around scared. You double over, a sharp pain in your gut suddenly as you watch the scene unfold before you. You try to shut your eyes, you try so hard because the longer you watch the more it hurts. You finally thrash your way out, everything starts to go dark

around you, but you don't exactly feel afraid.

When you wake up you're so groggy. Trying to open your eyes was like pulling yourself through molasses in the dead of winter. You blink them open eventually, after a hard fight. You're surrounded by bright fluorescent lights that burn. You whine and try to cover your eyes. Large hands pull your own away from your face, as your pupils slowly adjust.

"Brandi, baby, you there?" you know it's Jim the moment his voice hits your ears. You force a small moan up your throat, but it doesn't make it out of your mouth, but it's enough for Jim to know you can hear him.
You try with eventual success to focus on him. You hear the steady beeping of machinery. Specifically hospital monitors. You groan loudly and try to look around, still squinting.

"Hate. Hospitals." you manage to say. You look at Jim and he half-heartedly smiles. He reaches up to move your hair away from your face. You've apparently gained enough consciousness to notice the blue hair tie around his wrist. Your eyes open wide and you hear the heart monitors start beeping very fast, you look back to Jim's face, now confused and scared.

"It's me, Brandi." he shushes you, assuming you don't recognize him. "It's me baby, It's Jim." he whispers, his face close to yours, holding your arms down as they tried to reach out and grab his arm. He assumed you were trying to hit him, you didn't blame him for that. You shake your head back and forth.

"No." you blurt out. He narrows his eyes, this was hurting him, you could tell.

"Yes, my country mouse, it is. It's your Hop. I'm not hurting you, you're safe." he presses his lips against your forehead, trying to ground you.

"Your arm." you manage to form, your brain function slowly improving. He releases his grip on you, he looks at his arms, confused. His hands still hover over you in case you lash out again.

“What is it, baby? I didn’t mean to hurt you, I’m sorry. I can’t let you hurt yourself though.” he hurriedly explains.

“The hair tie, Hop.” you get out, your head falling back, you’re exhausted and your head throbs.

“Is that why you passed out? You found it and thought it was another woman’s?” He had gone with what his detective skills had concurred when he found you passed out on your floor with it in your hand. Although you felt a bit insulted that he thought you were as fragile to faint over the possible idea he would cheat on you, you understood his deduction.

“No.” you whisper, letting him know that wasn’t the case. “What was that?” you ask, not entirely making sense to him since he didn’t know what you’d just experienced.

“You’re not making sense, baby. Just rest. We can talk later, they gave you a lot of medicine, you should just sleep.” he kisses your hair, petting the side of your face as you close your eyes.

“The girl, Hop. I keep seeing her.” you rasp out, your head hurts so bad, you want to cry.

You feel him go still against you. “Wh-what?” he asks hesitantly.

“Why are you wearing that?” you raise your head and look directly at the hair tie on his wrist.

“It’s…it was Sara’s.” he blinks and looks away from you. You knew who Sara was, he’d mentioned her, told you what happened on one of your more late nights full of deep conversations and booze. “It was her birthday, “he inhales sharply, “…last month so I, uh…took it out.” his lips now in a tight line.

“She wore it?” you asked, your vision blurred, you whimpered and reached up to touch your head.

“Yeah, I- I kept it after she died.” he swallows hard. The last thing he expected after this today was having to talk about losing his little girl while he was once again feeling the possibility of losing you. He shakes his head to snap out of it. “I used to wear it a lot more, years

ago.” he elaborates. “You’ve probably seen it before.” he tries to pull his focus to the current girl in his life who he could still possibly help.

“I saw her wearing it.” you look up at him. His face is confused, he was sure he’d never shown you photos of her. He figured that he would have some point in the future if you kept getting along this well.

“You’ve never seen her, Brandi.” he calmly explains.

“I saw her.” you whine, your head keeps pounding, the heart rate monitor beeps increase.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, sweetheart, you’ve been passed out, you don’t even know what she looks like.” he pets your hair, heavily sighing.

“I do.” you say, your eyes opening again. His mouth tenses, he’s starting to wonder if the doctors should run more tests. “She had pigtails.” you say, his eyes widen but don’t match yours. “Am I right?” you ask, squinting at him.

“Most little girls do, Brandi, just relax, please.” he pleads.

“Blonde hair.” you say, your eyelids heavy. “Really light blonde hair…” you whisper, “a blue dress and pigtails in the park. That hair tie was in her hair.” you say low and choppy. “Big blue eyes just like her daddy’s…” you whisper, you want to cry, it makes your face go numb with pain.

He swallows to keep his tears in his eyes. “How-?” his voice is so weak, high pitched, he doesn’t know where to begin with telling you actually sounded right. “How can you know that?” he whispers.

“I told you, I saw her, ” you take a very deep breath, it was like your brain was trying to reboot. “I dreamed her and I saw her just now.”

“Just now? You’ve been unconscious, sweetheart.” he clears his throat to control himself.

Your eyes go wide with a terrifying and completely irrational

possibility. “Hop..” you grab his arm. He stares intently at you. “Did you…pick her up and chase her a lot? You’d act like you were eating her belly up and you’d lift her up in your arms?” you hate to bring up the memory but you knew this was important.

“Yeah,” he clears his throat again, you reach out to touch his face, a few tears fall from his eyes. If you could’ve cried you would have, the urge made the pain grow. “Yeah we did that a lot…” he sighs, then realizes you shouldn’t know this either, “Why? How?” his exhaustion is obvious in his voice now.

“I saw her through your eyes, Hop.” you knew that didn’t make any sense whatsoever. “It was like I was living your memory.” you hear a high pitched ringing in your ears, you place your hand back over your forehead.

“I don’t know how to respond to that,” he admits, shoulders slumping. “That makes no sense to me baby, I’m sorry.” he takes your hand into his, holding it up to his lips, pressing a kiss to your clammy skin.

You wince and look up at him. “Believe me, Hop. I know.”

10. Finding It

You'd seen Jim sneak back into the doctor's office before you were supposed to leave the hospital. They'd told you nothing was wrong, again, somehow. The usual blanket terms you heard at all your follow-ups," Everything within normal limits, nothing unexpected with your tests". You held his coat in your arms, you quietly made your way down to the office, pressing your back against the wall close to the open door.

"…there wasn't anything to indicate any further brain damage or any worsening of her pre-existing diagnosis. If anything her brain is healing exceptionally well. She's made an astounding recovery thus far, you're aware of that, right? Setbacks can happen when things like brain damage are involved."

"Yeah I know she's just…" He sighs, "She's said some things when she was coming out of it that were…off."

"We've run all we can here, her brain scans were more "lit up" as you put it, but that just means they are more active than they were in her most recent scan. But after an episode like she experienced it's nothing I'm concerned about. You said she's had an episode of anger just the other night, that could've triggered it. Any number of heightened emotional states could be a factor in causing something like this to happen while her brain heals. The blood tests were within normal limits, as well as her psychological evaluations. I'd tell you if there was something, Chief, I hope you know that." Jim feels a pang of guilt at the possibility he could've caused this unintentionally.

"I know, Doc." You decided to scuttle down the hall before he catches you eavesdropping.

———————-

Once you're home he treats you like you're made of glass again. You wish you could've enjoyed being waited on but your dumb brain had to short circuit and ruin everything. He made dinner and made you sit on the couch. Blankets and pillows surrounded you in abundance. You watched him move around your kitchen with puppy dog eyes. You wanted to go back to bed with him, have him kiss you like this never happened. You ache at the disconnect you feel from him right

now. You could tell from his mannerisms and the way he held tension in his shoulders that he was still very bothered by what you'd said.

He sits close to you on the couch, you eat in silence and watch television.

"I'm sorry." you announce, placing your hands in your lap after setting your empty plate on the coffee table. "I know what I said upset you and I don't want you upset." you sigh and look over at him. "I don't know what's going on, and I'm sorry for bringing you into my bullshit again." you give him a sad smile.

"Your bullshit is my bullshit now, you know that." he replies gruffly, wrapping his arms around you. You gladly lose yourself in his arms, feeling him against you. You melt into him with a sigh.

"I'm still sorry I upset you though." He huffs out a small laugh and kisses your head. "I don't like seeing you sad." you whisper.

"You didn't mean to. I'm okay." he rests his cheek on the top of your head, pulling you close. "We'll figure it out." he whispers, bringing your face up to look at his. "No hard feelings, promise." he lightly pecks your lips together.

"Can we try to get back to how we were before I decided to malfunction?" you scrunch your nose in a hopeful but hesitant smile. "I don't like this weird tension." He lets out a deep breath, rolling his neck and bouncing his shoulders.

"Tension gone." he says with the slightest touch of sarcasm.

"Nice try but I'll take it." you look up at him under your heavy lids, snuggling up against him. "Can we just try to start over tomorrow?" your voice is a bit whiney, but you figure you deserve the right to be.

"We'll always keep trying again tomorrow." his eyes are sad but he gives you a grin anyway, "That's what people like us do." he kisses you and you move to put your head in his lap, his arm drapes over you and you fall asleep early.

———

At some point he'd moved you to your bed, you wake up the next

morning. You couldn't remember any dreams but you'd also been heavily medicated.

Jim groans in response to the alarm blaring, waking both of you up. He knocks it off the nightstand unintentionally, but at least he shut it off in the process. You feel his arm snake around you, pulling you together as you had separated during the night. You feel his big warm body up against yours. The cold spots left on your skin, exposed through the night immediately warm and relax at his touch.

"Back to reality?" you grumble, cuddling his arm between your breasts as you nuzzled your face into his hand.

"'Fraid so." his voice deep and full of grit. He plants a kiss on your ear, lingering after. He wanted to remember how you smelled so he could think about it when the officers would inevitably start to raise his blood pressure later. You roll onto your back, still wrapped in his arms. You wanted to take in his sleepy face before he left. He sits up on his elbow, he kisses you softly. Giving you a squeeze before he has to leave the comfort you've built in the bed together. You let out a small moan as he kisses you, your guard completely down. You appreciate him getting back to his previous behaviors after your episode like you'd so desperately wanted. He'd done precisely as you had asked, you'd started over tomorrow. His hand moves to your hip, you make another small noise. His fingers grip on your hip as you realize you might be starting something you hadn't meant to. His lips move from yours to your jaw. You close your eyes and smile.

"You gotta work, don't you babe?" you groan as he works the skin underneath your ear.

"I'm workin' on something right now." he retorts against your neck and you let your laugh shake your whole body.

"You workin' on being late." you tease as you turn to move his lips back to yours. He chuckles at you, his hands sliding down your back to your ass, grabbing you with his big hands.

"Quit being right." he smiles and kisses you, finally pulling away. By the time you've finished stretching and groaning into the pillows he's made his way to the bathroom door.

“Miss ya already.” you mumble, rolling yourself in blankets. He laughs and shakes his head as he watches you. You think he’s left the room. You grab the pillow he slept on, hugging it tightly and slamming your face into it. You groan into it. It smells just like him. You wonder how you can keep this smell around when he’s not sleeping over at your place.

He quietly makes his way into the bathroom feeling too optimistic about how light his heart felt while he watched you. He feels the thought creeping into the back of his mind that this small bit of normalcy is a front, and it’s too good to be true. He’d gotten carried away and possibly started all this far too soon for you. The only thing he’d been able to concentrate on was his interpretation of “This is your fault.” he heard from the doctor before he left the hospital with you. Heightened emotional states can be triggering when her brain is healing, he’d said. He couldn’t help but feel responsible for bringing this trouble into your life. You’d been doing fine before he came along. He couldn’t find it in himself to regret his decision while he watched you happily moan and groan in the bed you’d been sharing together.

You roll out of bed, after snuggling around in the smell of him on your sheets. You throw on a robe and go to start some coffee. He eventually comes out of your room, with his uniform on, tossing his duffle bag onto the couch while he finishes getting ready. You can smell his cologne from the steam escaping the bathroom. Your nose twitches as you pick up on his scent. You watch him move around the cabin, filling out his uniform perfectly.

“I need to send a fruit basket to whoever does the alterations for your uniforms.” you smirk as you sip your coffee in the kitchen. He smirks at you as he walks over to you, you hand him a thermos of coffee.

“Thanks for thinking I would get something tailored, but this is all me.” he chuckles as he leans in to kiss you again. You find your hands wanting to roam over his body.

“Then I’ll have to thank you later instead.” you let out a low laugh. You give his butt one good pat before you move from the kitchen to distance yourself from his body. You go grab his bag and stand by the door as he pulls his belt and gun on. He takes the bag to the car and

returns to you. He embraces you in the doorway.

“I’ll let you know when I get off, with me being gone who knows what shape they’re in. It may be late.” he pulls you close, you both resume kissing, neither wanting to let go. “But I’d like to stay here again tonight. I don’t want you alone for too long.” he says against your lips.

“Of course.” you say quickly, your hands starting to move across his broad shoulders. You make yourself pry your hands and mouth off of him, because you know you should, not because you want to. You walk back in to get his hat. His large frame darkens the doorway, he smoothly places his hat on his head while he maintains eye contact with you.

“If anything even remotely feels wrong,” he begins.

“I call you.” you smile up at him. You wondered how a heart as emotionally overworked as his could even fit into this big body it occupied.

“You call me.” he finishes anyway, the corner of his mouth rises as his eyes take you in again before he leaves you. God, he didn’t want to leave you today, he hated that he was. He had wanted you to pout and whine, pull him back to bed with you, tell him you needed him here with you. He pulls you close to him, not squeezing too tightly, your smaller body suddenly felt fragile against him again, like it had after your accident. This brought back his acid reflux at the thought of you both having to go through that again. He’d been preoccupied with flashes of you after the accident since he’d found you on the floor yesterday. He pushed back the obtrusive impulses to stay and protect you like his instincts were telling him to.

“I’ll call you.” you mumble against him, your hands pat his sides, letting him know you were okay. “So'kay Hop.” you raise your head and initiate a kiss which he passionately returns, hands on your face, his eyes screwed shut in emotional pain.

“I’m going to call you every chance I get.” his arms release you. “You’re going to get annoyed so…” he shrugs in defense. “Just a heads up.” You can’t help but smile and huff out a laugh.

“Thanks for the heads up.” you put your thumbnail between your teeth in an attempt to hide your amusement. The smitten feeling was back, right in your belly where it had just been hiding. You hoped this meant the medication they’d pumped you full of was starting to work it’s way out of your system. “I won’t get annoyed, you’re adorable when you act like this.” your voice is low and breathy. His surprised eyes make your heart melt.

“I thought you hated it.” his face softens and he reaches out for your free hand.

“I never hated it, I just hated having to need someone to take care of me,” you confess, your lips curl into a smile around the nail you’re biting. “What am I going to do? Get mad at you for caring if I live or die? That hardly seems fair.” you snarkily respond, he returns the expression.

“Glad you’ve come around on that then.” he leans in close, “One more kiss for the road, sweetheart.” you let out a giggle and softly press your lips against his. “Love you.” he mumbles against your lips. The words still invoke fear but they are also quickly washed over by the warm waves of your own undying devotion that you decide to remain unspoken.

You manage to reciprocate in the closest way you can get to the words, “You too.” you murmur back against him. You don’t let the moment last, moving quickly into another line of thought. “Come back home safe to me, Chief.” you murmur against him. “Don’t do anything stupid, please.” you whine as you pull away from him. Your words were your own way of saying you loved him, the student had surpassed the teacher it seemed in terms of verbally expressing their emotions.

You fall back into your bed. You take a deep breath and try to relax. You should have asked him to stay, you knew he wanted you to. You grab his pillow again, locking your arms around it. You contently hum into the soft lump that smells like him. Your thoughts drift off, carried away by his handsome face and the words he’d been whispering into your ear the past few days. Before you know it you’re asleep again. This time you, unfortunately, dream. If that’s even what you could call what was happening to you.

You're back in the giant room full of bubbled moving pictures. This time it's slightly different. There's one very large orb undulating and shining with a red aura in front of you. The others are still there, crowding up space but they are small, seem unimportant in comparison. They feel more faint, farther away than the quivering red sphere that felt like it beckoned you. The others are also not pulsing with this deep, almost maroon colored light. You take a deep breath and decide if this is really happening, which it sure as shit felt like it really was, you might as well try to approach this intelligently, and try to form a theory as to what was happening to you. Attempt to wrap your brain around what exactly this place is that doesn't seem to actually really exist. The thought alone confuses the hell out of you.

You always thought if you went crazy, you'd somehow know it, although that isn't how our understanding of human psychology generally works. However, you still really didn't feel crazy right now. You felt like an observer, as if you weren't in your own personal headspace, that this place wasn't of your making. Your work in the mental health field had in no way prepared you for whatever was happening to you. This surpassed your realm of expertise and you suspected might far surpass any realm of human understanding you could find in any book in the Hawkins Library. You let your natural curiosity take over, and decide to take this literal giant red glowing sign in front of you to proceed into possible madness. The scene playing inside was too dark to make out much of. You squint as you see a road coming into sight. You correct your posture and raise your hands to the object's surface, the red glow reflecting back onto your face and hands. As your fingertips slowly pushed out and in, it's surface felt different. The sensation of sandpaper dragging across your skin where you made contact catches you off guard, had the other one felt like this too? You hadn't been calm enough to notice last time. Your body moves through the rough surface, making your skin feel raw. It's easier to push yourself through the barrier this time. You feel like you're Alice falling down the rabbit hole as you hit with a thud into someone else's point of view.

You look around and immediately recognize the interior of the vehicle you're in. You're speeding in the Chief's Blazer, you see his hands hit the steering wheel in frustration. His lights spin, strobing

out light to illuminate the dark road. You hear his voice, mumbling "No." over and over like a prayer. He pulls up to a police barricade, there are other officers on the scene, the asphalt is wet, it's been drizzling and the smell of the wet late autumn leaves is in the air. This dream is vivid. Almost hyper-sensitive. Every one of your senses is totally engaged. You can feel the tightness in his chest, the shaking of his sweating hands. The hum of the scene, the strobe effect of the numerous official vehicle lights still spinning. The snapping of a crime scene camera. Someone you don't recognize, a man in uniform approaches you quickly, holding out his hand.

"I don't think you need to see this, Chief." he says low, his brow furrowed.

"See what exactly Williams?" he groans out, you feel dizzy and nauseous. "I hear a call on a female body being found out here with no other details right after my girl, Miller, my…" he swallows hard, you feel the ache build in your stomach, similar in feeling to how it made you feel to watch Sara. "Brandi Miller just left the station not that long ago." you feel your heart race. You can see a group of officers across the road, they're all whispering and looking over at you. "Is it her? The girl from my office?" your knees weaken, you feel his body rev up, like a motorcycle had just been started underneath you. The pained expression on the other officers face tells him yes. "No…" he says in a painful sound you never want to hear again. But you just keep hearing him say it over and over. You want to shut this out because hearing him made you want to die.

He shoves Williams aside as a group of officers comes running towards him. "IS IT BRANDI?" he shouts as two of the men hold their arms up to stop him, he puts his hands on them to easily push them out of the way. The rest move as a unit and brace up against his huge, powerful form storming towards where the paramedics are, hurriedly working on a body in the grass. "IS IT HER?" he chokes out, a shout coming up from his gut with tears in his eyes, just on the precipice of falling. You hear him let out an awful wheeze from deep in his chest. The officers are yelling at him but it's all indistinguishable to you, just loops of "No, Don't, Stop, You don't want to see this. Please, Chief, No." He keeps pulling his arms away from the other mens grasp. He's trembling all over with rage.

“Someone better give me a fucking answer!” he screams. The chorus of voices rises but gives you the same responses.

A woman away from the mob around him catches his eye. Her eyes are full of tears, she knows who you are, and Jim knows this too. She also knows you’re possibly dying on the side of the road as she watches the Chief take out the other counties officers by himself. His eyes beg her to tell him. She nods, mouthing yes. You feel a hard jolt, like the ground was pulled out from under you. You try to gain your footing but the images that are blurring so loud and fast at you are hard to make sense of. You hear Jim choke out, “Let me see her.” Then you feel him start to cry. Then you hear him again, “LET ME SEE HER!” he screams again, you feel the spit leaving his mouth as it all mixes together in his beard with his tears and sweat. His teeth gnashing and fists flying against the mob of what he now saw as enemies.

The realization of what you’re about to see hits you. Not what Jim is feeling, but you. He lunges forward, breaking past the group of men trying to stop him. The feeling you experience separately from this memory is so eerily similar to his own. You see yourself on the stretcher, strapped in and completely…drenched in blood. There’s so much blood. Even the red glow the soundless sirens give off don’t take away from how much it covers your broken body. You feel nauseous and you don’t know if it’s from you or the memory. You see Jim’s hands reach up and out for you, vibrating with emotion. You hear a muffled sob escape him. The tears well up in your own eyes at the sight. It hits you deep in your heart as to why he acts how he does with you now. It had been so much worse than you could’ve ever imagined. You both start sobbing. Violent, ugly, body convulsing sobs. Your poor face, so small against his outstretched hand. It was swollen and purple and twisted in some horrible surrealism painting inspired mess. You reach up to touch your own face, you think you might throw up. You hear him say your name. Even worse you feel him say it. It was something you never wanted to hear again. You scream at the sound of it. It was the worst feeling you’d ever experienced. You could think of no moment in your life that hurt as much as this did right now. An emotion that so completely took you over, that it could no longer emotionally hurt worse, so it transformed into physical pain as well. You thought you might die it

hurt so much. Not your miscarriage, not any abuse, not even your own mother dying made you feel what this did. You had always thought that Jim was intense and sensitive. You had imagined how deep down those feeling went that you had witnessed behind his eyes over the years. But now you were feeling it yourself. In that moment you found a new respect for Jim. You are pulled away from your thoughts as you feel yourself be pulled backward and shoved into the ground. You hear him say your name again, his face pushed into the surface of the cragged road, he lets out a terrible heart-wrenching growl as he struggles to get up, you felt the weight of all those men on top of you. It was all too much and you knew you were going to be sick this time.

Your eyes jolt open and you turn to your stomach, up on your hands and knees as you dry heave violently. As you realize you aren't going to actually vomit, you start to wheeze. You gasp and start sobbing. What the fuck was happening to you? You can't stop the vocal cry as you yell against the memory of what that pain felt like. You remember your face and you dry heave again. You let your arms give out and collapse onto the bed. Your hands grip the sheets, you scream into the pillow Jim had used the night before. You feel arms grab you suddenly. You scream and lash out, terrified and overwhelmed. You kick and elbow your attacker while they struggle to hold onto you. You land a few shots and hear various noises of discomfort. Once you hear them, you still.

"Jesus Christ, Brandi, why did you let me leave you?" he pleads, holding you tightly against his chest now. You start sobbing. He shushes you and holds you. What else could he do at this point?

"Lemme go." you whimper, you struggle gently against him, he hesitantly loosens his grip on you. He's surprised when you turn around so fast and attach yourself to him, your arms around his neck and your legs land on either side of him as you knock him to the bed. "I'm so sorry." you cry.

"Hey! Hey, it's fine, kid, Jesus, it's alright." he can't hide the confusion in his voice.

"I'm so sorry, Hop. So sorry." is all you can manage to equate to what you wanted to say to him. You let yourself sob and she shooshes you,

he pulls you with him, his back against your headboard. You leave yourself wrapped around him, and he holds you while you work through something he doesn't understand. He takes one of your hands, now resting on his chest and he kisses it. Holding it against his mouth. He hoped in your current state you'd recognize what he was doing. You rise and use the blanket to wipe your face. You take a few deep shaky breaths, fanning yourself with your hands. You run your hands through your hair. You breathe deeply and exhale noisily, trying to compose yourself. His other hand lands on your thigh, his thumb caressing you. You look back into his eyes.

"I'm sorry." you whisper.

"You don't have anything to be sorry for, sweetheart. You don't have control over this." you let out a laugh and the look of true concern washes across his face.

"You have no idea." you say out of habit, then you realize he does. "Actually you do." you mumble.

"I think I need to take you back to the hospital, baby." his voice higher pitched and serious.

"I think I have a theory about what's happening to me." you say shakily. "But it's going to make me sound crazy." you look back into his eyes. "And I mean really crazy." you sigh and rest your hands on his chest. "Crazier than I know you think I'm going right now, just by looking into those gorgeous eyes of yours." You felt a tsunami of emotion building inside you. You'd never been on this side of a truly scared Hopper, and you were right now. "Is it too much to ask for you to trust me on this?" you lean back down over him, his mouth twitches and his eyes soften.

"You know I trust you. I'll listen to you forever, baby, I don't care if doesn't make any sense." he almost laughs, wrapping his arms around you, feeling overwhelmed by how much he was worried about you. You want to cry again but not because of the horrors you had just felt and witnessed. You didn't deserve this kind of love. You didn't deserve someone who felt things like he did, you weren't worth that much trouble and pain. You lean back again so you can look at him. Once he see's your eyes, he feels a slight glimmer of hope. You didn't

look like you were lost, you looked very much still in control.

“I don’t deserve you, Jim.” you put your hand on his face. His mouth opens to argue but you place your fingers across his lips. “Don’t argue with me, handsome,” you smile at him, aching with adoration. You try to think of where to even begin with your words. “Up until now there was a lot I assumed I knew about you.” you run your thumb over his lip as you speak. “Turns out, no surprise to you I’m sure, that I’m full of shit and don’t know a damn thing.” you chuckle. He’s confused but he’s trying to let himself be humored by your words. “I have so much respect for you. I don’t know how you keep going when you have a heart so big.” your voice fades to a whisper the longer you speak. You close your eyes for a moment, you feel him take your hand into his, holding it on his chest. His other hand warms your face, still damp from your tears.

“Not that I don’t appreciate it, but what brought this on, sweetheart?” he speaks softly.

“I’ll tell you that later.” you smile, feeling like you might actually be okay. You both might make it through whatever this was. “But right now there’s something else I need to tell you.” you swallow and sigh.

“I’m listening, baby, what is it?” he whispers supportively. A tear escapes your eye from his tenderness. You lean into his hand and let out a content hum. You hold his hand against your face, turning your eyes to his.

“I love you.” your voice thankfully doesn’t break as you confess. It’s the least you could give him after everything you’ve put him through.

The look in his eyes tells you he had noticed everytime you hadn’t said it back. But he knew you well enough to know that pushing you into something would never make you do it. He had to patiently wait for you to catch up with his feelings sometimes, and he was happy to wait on you. The corner of his mouth pulls back, you both share the same expression.

“I love you.” his voice low. He leans in to kiss you. When he pulls back from the kiss he see’s you’re crying again. He bites his lip and wipes them away. “Baby?” he whispers, asking you what’s wrong.

You shake your head and let out a small laugh.

“I’m okay right now.” you whisper back, then you sigh at him. “I really do love you, Jim.” your nose scrunches slightly, trying to express what you had been cowardly and selfishly holding back. His eyes tear up slightly and you give him a soft peck the cheek. “I love you so much.” you move to kiss his other cheek. “I should’ve said it a lifetime ago.” you mumble as you push your face against his, wrapping your arms around his neck, his long arms pull you in. “I know I have the worst timing the whole universe.” you let out a small laugh at yourself. “I’m sorry.” you move to kiss the side of his head.

“Hush.” he sighs against you. “I knew you’d get there eventually. ” he nuzzles his face on yours. You smile and close your eyes. “I love you too.” he kisses your face again. “So much.” he whispers, moving you into another kiss, he thought he might be able to express his thankfulness for your words better this way.

You let yourself cry a few tears while you kiss. You didn’t like feeling even remotely disconnected from him for the short amount of time your new problem had made itself known. You knew you were doomed and you didn’t care. You truly didn’t care for the first time in your entire life. You feel your heart cracking open as you started to let yourself fall. You’d been on the edge, your toes gripping tightly into the delicate, crumbling earth of loneliness, worn under the guise of being independent and self-sufficient. You’d been clinging to this idea you’d never love someone like this, you thought it wasn’t possible. What was even more impossible was someone loving you this much. And now that your mind was more open than it had ever been, you felt your heart joining in on the evolution. You felt yourself jump off the cliff’s edge, head first and fast into the canyon that was yours and Jim’s love.

11. Chapter 11

You ask Hopper for some time to gather your thoughts, you just need to think this out. He gives you this without hesitation, but under one condition.

Yes, it's fast, but he already has a key. It's too soon but you've both played it safe before and it's ended in flames, so why wouldn't you try following your instincts for once? Your lives clearly weren't normal anymore, so why should you hold yourself to other peoples standards anymore? It was a real unifying moment of saying "Fuck it." together and letting the cards fall where they may. He can't stand to be away from you because he worries, feel's responsible for your problems. You can't stand to be away from him because he grounds you, his touch makes everything hurt less. It's a smidge co-dependent, sure, but for right now it's working. You move in together. There hasn't been a night yet where you'd crawled into bed that you'd regretted the decision.

Over the next few days, you read. You read so much your eyes cross and you fall asleep with a book open in your hands. You call old college friends for information, you go to the school's libraries that are close enough to drive to do research. The Hawkins librarian is weirdly rude to you but you get what you came for anyway. You even write letters to a few promising parapsychology researchers. You've been focused on yourself, your problems at hand. In the back of your mind, you felt bad for ignoring Jim, but he said he understood and continued taking care of you. You needed to remember how supportive he'd been through all this to thank him later.

You think you've come to some conclusions. The academic part of your brain was frustrated by your lack of solid conclusion. It all felt so flimsy and whimsical and just not...real. You decide to sit Hopper down and give him what little information you had. He liked to work in facts, just like you, but there wasn't any science you had access to, to explain what was happening between the two of you.

The only science-based evidence you could conjure up was how you physically started being able to do this. You checked out a book on

brain anatomy and function, getting lost in huge volumes with a highlighter and your notebook for days on end. But it turns out for as much as we do know about the human brain, that there is that much and more we don't know. That didn't take into account the ideas of the human soul and consciousness. That was a whole other can of worms that you had held off on deep diving into because you didn't know if you could take on more questions and even fewer answers.

You have your notebook dedicated to your ailment. If that's what you wanted to call it. Some called it a power, a unique ability. You'd heard of psychics before sure. But you thought it was all bogus. It's all con artists who are good at reading body language and putting together environmental factors to fool people. But you weren't doing that. You didn't want to even do it, but you couldn't help it. You weren't draining people of their money to give them a chance to speak to their dead relatives, no, your particular set of skills was different.

Over the past week or so, while doing research your episodes stalled. You'd stayed calm and distracted. You'd not passed out again or thought you were going to die from pain and that was a nice change of pace. You had however started having the same dream. Every night. You knew what this meant. This time, it wasn't you climbing into a memory of Jims, you were in one of your memories again. One that you still couldn't remember fully. Each night you got farther and farther into your dream, closer to the goal you wanted to reach. You knew some night you'd finally get to the end of it. Your progress felt slow but you had other things to worry about besides your own repressed memories. How quickly your priorities had shifted. You had to figure this out for Jim, not just yourself. He'd carried that heavy weight of guilt around with him over the week he'd staying here with you. You didn't even know why. You'd catch him staring at you as you read, he kept bringing you sweets for no reason when he'd come home from work, but this wasn't the leftover baby love between the two of you. His eyes were sad behind his half-hearted smiles and it broke your heart everytime you noticed it. You knew you had to push through to understand what was going on, to help both of you.

One night you throw all your notes onto the coffee table. You stand over the books and papers, a pencil behind your ear, chewing your

bottom lip. This was as far as you were getting on your own. Jim looks at you, his eyebrows raised from his sitting position o the couch.

"I'd like to present my evidence, Chief." you say with a nervous laugh.

"This what you've been working on?" he asks, leaning forward and picking up a paperclipped group of papers, scribbled and highlighted.

"Yeah." you say hesitantly, rubbing the back of your neck. "For what good it all did me." you sigh, your hand on your hip. "It's been so long since I've done research." you rub your forehead with the palm of your hand. "Forgot how crazy it'll make you feel." you let out a small laugh. "Not that I need help in that area." you roll your eyes at yourself and grab your legal pad and sit next to Jim.

"You've even got notes to talk to me?" his voice has a hint of teasing to it.

"Uh, yeah. Of course. Why?"

"Nothin'." he says a small smile on his face at your expense.

"No nothin'. What?" you shake your hand at him for an answer.

"It's just, it's cute." he lets out a low laugh.

"Cute?" you act offended. "I'll have you know I'm a professional, Hop." you say sarcastically, hugging the papers to your chest.

"Alright, Professor, what's the prognosis on that pretty head of yours?" he says, his expression purely affectionate and supportive.

You take a deep breath and widen your eyes in preparation, your lips in a tight line as your hands hold the sides of your notepad in your lap as a way to focus.

"I want to preface this all with, it's...well, it's all fucking crazy. I don't know how else to put it. It just sounds so improbable to my sense of reason and logic." you bite your lip and let out another deep breath. "We aren't working with facts and proven science here. This is all theoretical so I'm afraid none of it is any more than a hunch as to

what is happening to me."

"I had assumed as much. But you're smart, I'm sure it's the best theory anyone could come up with in your situation." he smiles softly at you, leaning in closer, you sit side by side and he looks at your notes as you look up at his face and start to attempt to explain behavior.

"Thanks." you mumble at him, caught off guard by his charm. You watch his eyes move over your handwriting. "Apparently what I have is a sort of extrasensory perception. Which just means I can sense or know things that should be out of my realm of understanding. Things I shouldn't be able to know or do." you watch his face follow the corresponding words on the pad he's taken into his own hand to hold between the two of you. "I've shown some potential with psychometry from your experience with Sarah's hair tie. That's picking up on energies, vibes, memories from objects." you move your hand while you speak, sometimes pointing to the paper. "Some readings say I'm Clairvoyant, or I can gain information on a person or thing through unnatural means." you say entirely too casually like this was getting to be boring at this point because you'd read so much about it. "I seem to be particularly skilled in retrocognition or seeing things that have already happened." you look back up to him and he moves his eyes from the sheet and looks at you.

"I've heard a few stories of police having psychics solve disappearances before. So it's within that category?" he asks, showing he's trying to understand and help.

"Exactly." you smile up at him. "But most importantly, it seems I'm connected to you and your memories." you pause and give a subtle shrug. "Which isn't specifically addressed in any peer-reviewed pieces I could find." you snort at the understatement. "I dabbled in some New Age readings that mentioned it but it's all very whimsical in nature. So I'm no help there." you chew the inside of your cheek in thought.

"New Age stuff?" he asks, his brow furrowing in question.

"Yeah, you know, uh, crystals and energy and soul mates, that sorta thing." you dismiss it with your hand as you speak, looking at the paper again.

"Soul mates?" he says, both teasing and with a hint of curiosity. You're taken off guard by him again, as you stop and smile up at him, indulging him.

"You know," you shrug and smile sheepishly, "Two people that are connected by some supernatural means." you say plainly explain.

"I'm familiar with the idea, sweetheart, I meant what about that has to do with this specifically?" he corrects you without sounding condescending, motioning to your head.

"It was the stories about how some are so connected that they gain telepathy and feel the others pain." he raises an eyebrow at you suppressed and you blush at the suggestion. "Or that's what I read that might apply to this situation anyway." you smirk, looking away from him, still feeling the heat in your face.

"That's all I really found as far as explaining what's happening by relating it to other things that have been previously recorded." you frown slightly.

"This is a ton of information, why are you frowning?" he asks, raising your chin up to him.

"It was a lot of work for nothing it feels like. There are no real answers just a pseudoscience that technically doesn't even exist." you explain, he moves his hand from your chin to your hair.

"Well, if you didn't learn anything new, I certainly did." he shrugs in defense of your work. You sigh up at him. He's so sweet. You kiss his cheek before you flip the page on the legal pad, showing another bulleted page of notes. "Oh there's more." he says surprised, chuckling and moving his arm around the back of the couch, over your shoulders as you instinctually shift closer into his chest, your temple so close to his jaw you can feel the tickle of his beard when he gets too close. He holds the paper in one hand as you rest your hand on his stomach.

"There's always more with me." you joke. He kisses the top of your head. "This is the physical aspect." you motion with a pointed finger the words you've written. "From what my doctors have told me, and

from what I've learned on TBI's, I have a hunch as to how this could happen. Even though it sounds like a sci-fi movie pitch." you let out a huff of a laugh. "Since my frontal lobe was what was compromised in the accident, that's where I started." You tap the sheet and return to look up at him as you freestyle the rest of the information. "It controls...well, a lot, put it that way. Most importantly in my case, it affects memory, and that's something I've struggled with since the accident. We've been told my brain is healing exceptionally well..." you pause and wait for him to notice, for him to look at you. "The next bit of information is where my hunch comes in." you frown slightly, this is where you started to feel like you were losing it when you explained it. "What if my brain healed too well?" his brow furrows subtly, thinking. "What if somehow, while it's been healing, it made a new connection somewhere it didn't have before?" his face is still intent on listening, no surprise reactions so far, you decide to continue. It all flows out of you in a passionate sale pitch for your ability as you try to make sense. "Or what if this ability is existent, but under normal circumstances that we understand, you can't access it without some sort of, anomaly. In my case, that would be the injury and re-connecting of my brain. If during the healing process, something that couldn't show up on any test, any MRI happened, causing this. If extrasensory perception is a science we don't have the tools to understand, then something like this wouldn't show up on any test that we currently have the technology to interpret." You stop as you realize he hasn't said anything. His face is still indifferent. As you look back up at him, reeling yourself back in after your short presentation on your brain.

"I thought you said this would make you sound crazy?" a relieved smile falls across his face. Your mouth opens with surprise, your eyelashes flutter with shock. "Although under any other circumstances you talking smart like that would really do it for me." he lets out a low huff of a laugh, kissing your cheek. Finding your wide eyes filled with relief and surprise at his reaction, a bit stunned. You blush at his words and he moves his hand down to your shoulder to rub it comfortingly.

You let out a small girlish noise, grateful he's so graceful with his actions in dealing with this.

"Although it's not based in science exactly, like you said, I understand your ideas." he shrugs and looks down at you so casually. "I mean, all that was honestly the most sense things have made since this has happened. You've got a theory and that's something."

"Ugh." you can't help to let out the noise. You're looking at him, empathetic and tactful. So loving and giving, your heart thumped. You were frustrated in a strange way at his responses. You felt your pulse between your legs awaken after being suppressed for the entirety of your research.

His face is confused as he lets out a laugh at your reaction.

"You're so..." you sigh, your hand moves up to his chest. You look him over, thinking about the personality traits you want to list off, you find your mood switching over to something less innocent. You settle for the word, "Good." because you feel it encompasses enough to cover sincerity and innuendo. It comes out breathier than intended but you're pleased with the results as a smirk appears on his face as he watches you absentmindedly bite your lip.

"Good?" he asks for clarification, his eyebrows raised and voice low. He could see your half-lidded eyes switch from bright to dark. He was also suddenly very aware of how hard it'd been to not touch you during this whole project of yours.

"Yeah." you say with a nod of your head, you let the mischievous grin spread across your face. He doesn't respond and you sit with that electricity you feel between the two of you in the suspense. You toss the notepad onto the table and straddle his lap, much to his surprise and delight.

"Did I miss something?" he asks in a low laugh, his arms instinctually move to your hips and you rest yours on his chest.

"Apparently," you tilt your head to the side at him. "When you're deeply supportive and understanding it turns me on." you say with a soft laugh. His brow lowers immediately at your words.

"Wouldn't have anything to do with how long it's been since I've got to touch you, would it?" he asks, his voice has a hint of playfulness

but mostly of a deeper motive, his face leaning into yours.

You let out a content hum of agreement. "It might." you bite your lower lip as you smile at him. You run your hands up his chest and to his shoulders. "I didn't realize how much I missed you until right now." you whisper, eye trailing over his face to his lips.

"Well I'm right here, you don't gotta miss me." he says smoothly, moving his hand to the back of your head. Reassuring you that your change in mood was a welcome one. You kiss him softly. He never pushes, he never rushes. Your rock in the turbulent stream, you hold him and move against him slowly, showing restraint.

"I've got another proposition for ya tonight, Hop." you grin at him, nuzzling your nose against his neck.

"Mmm?" he grunts out, eyes shut and lazy smirk as you pecked along his jaw.

"You've been workin' all day, and so have I in my own way..." you drag the last part of your sentence out in a soft tone.

"Your brain's been workin' harder than I have." he says in a deep rumble of a tone, chuckling at himself.

"It's been a rough week on both of us babe..." you drag out leaving a peck on his cheek. "But you've been takin' care of me so good, ain't ya?" you kiss his lips as his eyes lazily follow yours as you kiss his face, playing up your accent that makes the corners of his mouth pull back into that doofy looking smile of his you love.

"Mmm Hmm" he nods, planting a kiss in the corner of your mouth.

"So how about we go bed..." you tilt your head at him. "and actually get some sleep." you say with a lilt, he pouts but you laugh and kiss it away. "But we will be sleeping naked together if that makes you feel any better about it." you grin at him, fingers scratching in his beard.

"It does." he says in a muffled tone as he stretches his neck to let you scratch him.

"And in the morning, when you don't have to go to work we'll sleep

in and fuck..." you whisper to him, nose to nose.

"Making me feel much better about it." he says with a groan, as he thrusts his hips up under you to bounce you, hands patting your thighs.

"Then we fall back asleep and wake up and fool around before we eat and after that who knows." you say with a feminine chuckle, hands rubbing up and down his chest, as he sighs and holds a face of contemplation.

"I've waited longer for less." he says in a charming grin, hands splayed across your thighs, thumbs rubbing lazily back and forth.

"Yeah...Well you've earned what's coming to you in the mornin' you big, "You kiss his cheek. "...sweet," you smooch his other check. "...handsome," you return to the other side of his face again, "tall drink of water you." your hands rest on his cheeks mushing them slightly.

"You must be tired you're being awfully nice." he says with a laugh, grabbing you under your thighs and pulling you towards him, lifting you off the couch. You arch your back to hold onto him by the neck.

"Always nice." you murmur against his hair.

"Uh huh. Sure." he snickers. You grin into the fluff of his hair. "Let's get this sleepin' started baby, got a big mornin' planned." he says as you push the bedroom door shut behind him, his face going between your breasts and noisily kissing and nibbling away as lightly tosses you onto the bed with a pleasant bounce.

"Let's not skip over the gettin' naked part, now." you say with a mischievous grin, nose wrinkled as your hands made their way to the waistband of your pants. "Very important step." you say as you both shed the last layers between the two of you.

"Obviously." he lets out that rumbling chuckle that sends shudders down your spine when it hits your ears.

You crawl to the head of the bed and yank the covers back, he slides in from the side of the bed as you shimmy straight down into the

comforter. It doesn't take long for his hands to find your bare body, pulling your chest to his. His face finds it's way to the bend of your neck as it always has when his fingertips started to trace back and forth over the curve of your ribs to your hips.

"Mmmph." you grunt, giving him a wiggle to deter his efforts. "In the mornin' baby."

"'kay." he grumbles, holding his arm up and you turn to place your back against his chest, the arm slowly weighs down on your hip. "Mornin'." he says, a kiss to your shoulder in acknowledgment of your words.

You get to do your new favorite thing. The best thing to come out of living together and this whole ordeal. You get to lace your fingers into his, holding him against your chest, you can hear the snoring thinking of creeping out of his throat already as you feel his muscles relax. "Love ya." you get to mumble into his fingers, giving them a kiss before you rub your face into your pillow.

"Love you." you get to hear back in response, a grunt of sleepy enthusiasm follows his words, a sign to expect a kiss somewhere in your hair and as always you feel his breath exhales across your scalp as he does just that. Such a simple thing you'd been missing before. And now that you had it, this feeling that could almost fill up the void in your heart, you didn't know if you could live without again. And that the electrical storm of desperation to find answers and the impending doom of his possible rejection had passed and left in it's wake a calm serene sea horizon line. You pull his hand closer to you, recognizing the importance of a solid anchor when you experienced rough seas as often as you did.